



THE ABDUCTION OF SITA

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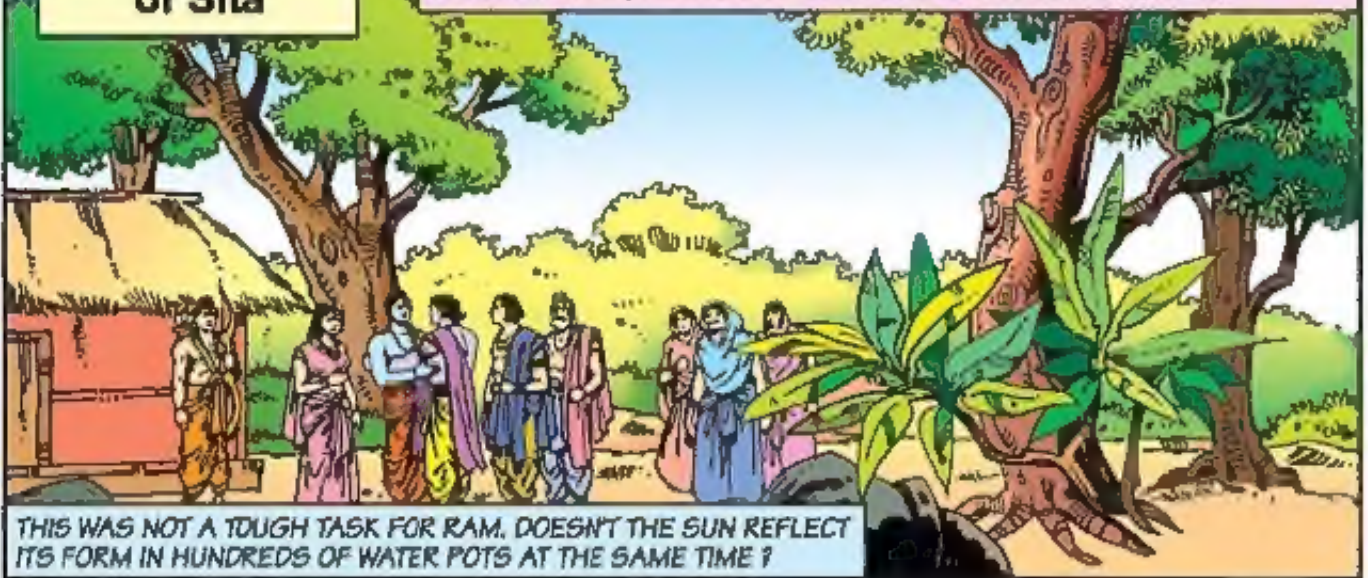
धीरज धर्म मित्र अरु नारी ॥
आपदकाल परित्तिअहिं चारी

Fortitude, piety, friend and wife are put to
test only during adversity.



The Abduction of Sita

IT WAS A SCENE OF GREAT EMOTIONAL REUNION. BHARAT LED A HUGE ASSEMBLY INCLUDING HIS BROTHER SHATRUGHN, THE QUEENS, SUMITRA, KAUSALYA AND KAIKEYI, GURU VASISHTH, MINISTERS AND SOLDIERS. WHEN RAM SAW THEM, HE GREETED EACH ONE WITH WARM AFFECTION.

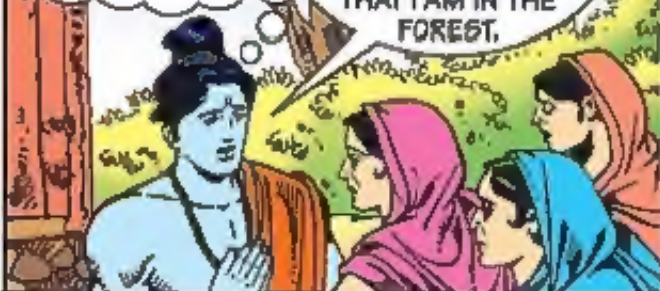


THIS WAS NOT A TOUGH TASK FOR RAM. DOESN'T THE SUN REFLECT ITS FORM IN HUNDREDS OF WATER POTS AT THE SAME TIME?

RAM SAW THAT THE THREE QUEENS WERE STRICKEN WITH GRIEF LIKE TENDER CREEPERS SMITTEN WITH FROST.

KAIKEYI MUST BE FULL OF REMORSE AND GUILT! I MUST GREET HER FIRST.

MOTHERS! DON'T GRIEVE SO! NO ONE IS TO BE BLAMED, IT'S ALL THE WILL OF GOD THAT I AM IN THE FOREST.



THE SOLDIERS AND CITIZENS SETTLED DOWN TO CAMP BY THE BANKS OF THE RIVER. GURU VASISHTH WAITED FOR A WHILE, AND GAVE A LITTLE DISCOURSE ON THE ILLUSORY NATURE OF THE WORLD, BEFORE HE BROKE THE SAD NEWS TO RAM.

YOUR FATHER, KING DASHARATH, HAS GONE TO HIS HEAVENLY ABODE!

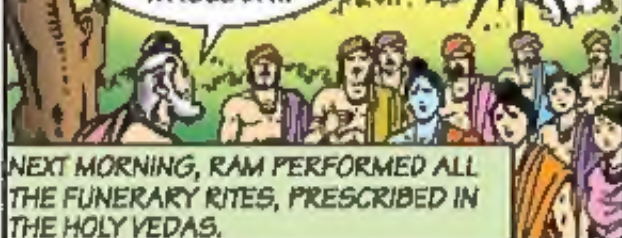
OH NO! IT WAS HIS EXCESSIVE LOVE FOR ME THAT KILLED HIM.



RAM'S SORROW MADE EVERYONE FEEL FORLORN. GURU VASISHTH GENTLY REMINDED RAM ABOUT THE LAST RITES FOR HIS FATHER.

YOU MUST BATHE IN THE RIVER MANDAKINI AND OBSERVE A STRICT NIRJALA FAST, WHERE YOU MUST NOT EVEN DRINK A DROP OF WATER THE WHOLE DAY.

WE TOO WILL OBSERVE A NIRJALA FAST.



NEXT MORNING, RAM PERFORMED ALL THE FUNERARY RITES, PRESCRIBED IN THE HOLY VEDAS.

TWO DAYS LATER, RAM REQUESTED THE PEOPLE TO RETURN TO AYODHYA.

HOW LONG CAN YOU STAY ON A MEAGRE MEAL OF ROOTS AND BULBS? I CAN'T BEAR TO SEE ALL OF YOU SUFFER SO!

YOU ARE SO CONSIDERATE, RAM. BELIEVE ME, THEY ARE HAPPY TO BE HERE!



THE FOREST DWELLER CLANS OF KOLS, KIRATS AND BHILS BROUGHT DAINTLY SEWN LEAF PLATES FILLED WITH HONEY, ROOTS, BERRIES AND HERBS.

THE CITY FOLK WERE AMAZED TO SEE THE EXOTIC FRUITS AND HERBS.

OH! LOOK HOW LOVELY THE LEAF BOWLS ARE! SO BEAUTIFUL.

AND SUCH LUSCIOUS FRUITS!

THE HONEY IS THE MOST DELICIOUS I'VE EVER TASTED! WE MUST PAY THEM WELL FOR THESE THINGS.



BUT THE FOREST-DWELLERS REFUSED TO ACCEPT ANY MONEY, INSISTING THAT THE FOOD WAS JUST A SYMBOLIC GESTURE OF FRIENDSHIP.

MEANWHILE, BHARAT WAS RESTLESS AND WORRIED. HE COULD NOT SLEEP AT NIGHT OR EAT BY DAY TIME.

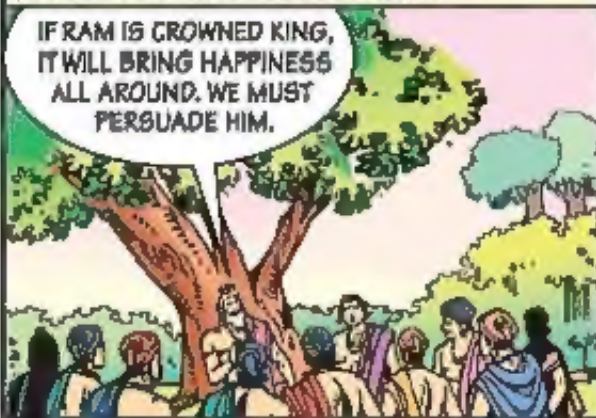
TWO DAYS HAVE GONE BY AND WE HAVEN'T EVEN SPOKEN ABOUT OUR PURPOSE OF COMING HERE! HOW WILL WE CONVINCE RAM TO ACCEPT THE THRONE OF AYODHYA?

WE MUST TAKE A DECISION SOON.



VASISHTH GATHERED THE MINISTERS AND CITIZENS OF AYODHYA AND CALLED FOR BHARAT. HE SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT THE VIRTUES RAM WAS BLESSED WITH.

IF RAM IS CROWNED KING, IT WILL BRING HAPPINESS ALL AROUND. WE MUST PERSUADE HIM.



THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY CHARGED PURPOSEFULLY TOWARDS RAM'S MUD HUT.

MY LORD, WE REQUEST YOU TO RETURN TO AYODHYA. I HAVE BROUGHT ALL THE THINGS FOR YOUR CORONATION. WE WILL CROWN YOU KING RIGHT HERE.



BHARAT HAD BROODED OVER THIS IDEA FOR SO LONG THAT WORDS NOW TUMBLED OUT OF HIS MOUTH.

PLEASE DON'T PUT THE BURDEN OF KINGSHIP ON ME. LET ME REMAIN IN THE FOREST INSTEAD OF YOU.



BUT RAM REMAINED SILENT.

EVEN AS THE PEOPLE TRIED TO GUESS THE REASON OF RAM'S SILENCE, MESSENGERS FROM KING JANAK'S COURT ARRIVED THERE.

IS ALL WELL AT JANAKPURI?

YES, HOWEVER, WE ARE SAD TO HEAR OF KING DASHARATH'S DEMISE. OUR KING JANAK WAS UPSET TO HEAR THE NEWS THAT BHARAT WAS TO BECOME KING AND RAM BANISHED TO THE FOREST.



The Abduction of sita



AS SOON AS JANAK SAW THE PEOPLE OF AYODHYA, HE DISMOUNTED FROM HIS CHARIOT.



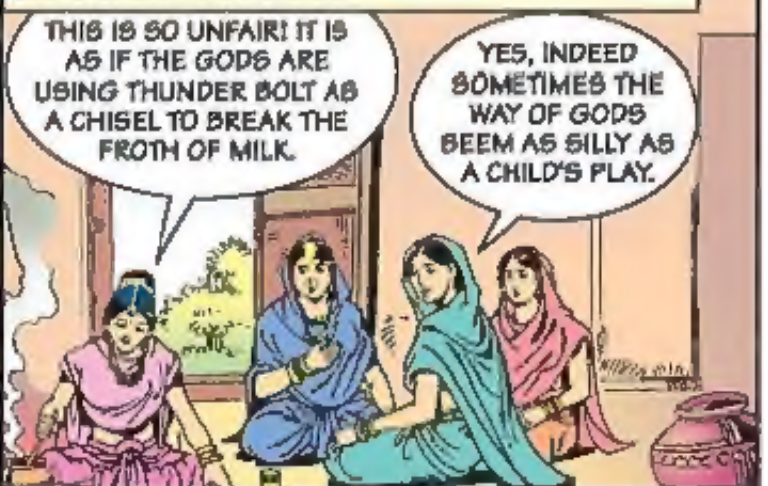
WHILE JANAK PAID HIS RESPECTS TO GURU VASISHTH, RAM AND LAKSHMAN BOWED TO THE SEERS FROM MITHILA.

SORROWFUL SPEECHES AND SAD SIGHS DROWNED THE ASSEMBLY IN A SEA OF GRIEF, AT THE LOSS OF KING DASHARATH.



SAGE VASISHTH URGED THE PEOPLE TO BREAK THEIR FAST. THE LUSH, GREEN FOREST WITH MYRIAD TREES, HELPED THEM TO RECOVER FROM THEIR GRIEF.

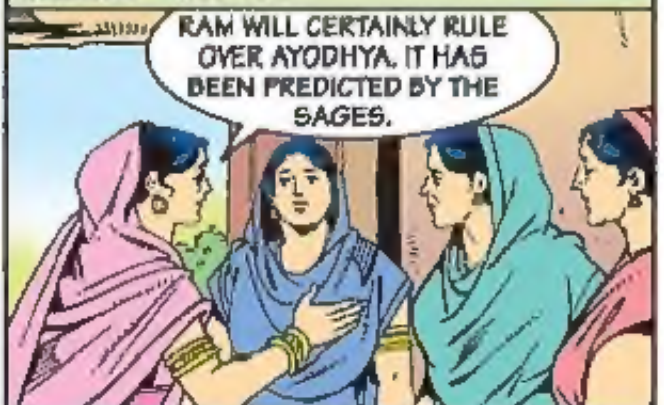
QUEEN SUNAYANA WAS SAD TO SEE HER DAUGHTER SITA'S LIFE IN THE FOREST.



THE WOMEN SHARED THEIR CONCERNS WITH EACH OTHER. KAUSALYA AND SUNAYANA WERE WORRIED ABOUT THE FUTURE.



SUNAYANA DID ANSWER FOR HER HUSBAND YET SHE COULD NOT LEAVE WITHOUT ASSURING THE QUEENS OF AYODHYA.



WITH THE PERMISSION OF KAUSALYA, SUNAYANA TOOK SITA WITH HER TO THEIR CAMP IN THE FOREST.

ALONE WITH HER PARENTS, JANAK AND SUNAYANA, SITA COULD BARELY CONTROL HER EMOTIONS.

MY HEART BIDS ME TO STAY HERE! BUT MY DUTY IS TO SERVE MY MOTHER-IN-LAW.

GO, DEAR DAUGHTER! BLESS YOUR LITTLE HEART FOR BEING SO DUTY-BOUND!



NOW SUNAYANA GRASPED THE OCCASION TO TELL JANAK ABOUT BHARAT'S STATE OF MIND.

KING JANAK AGREED THAT THE VIRTUOUS BHARAT WAS INDEED ONE OF A KIND. TO DESCRIBE HIM AS AN ORDINARY MORTAL WAS LIKE DECLARING THAT MOUNT SUMERU WEIGHED ONLY ONE SEER.*

YOU ARE RIGHT! IF LAKSHMAN RETURNS TO AYODHYA AND BHARAT GOES TO THE FOREST IT MAY BE THE BEST SOLUTION!

AND BHARAT WILL DO WHATEVER RAM SAYS.



ALL NIGHT LONG, THEY DISCUSSED THE PROS AND CONS OF THE SITUATION.

RAM TOO HAD SPENT THE NIGHT IN ANGUISH AND AT DAWN, CALLED ON GURU VASISHTH.

YOUR HOLINESS, BHARAT AND THE QUEENS ARE WEARY OF THE FOREST. KING JANAK TOO HAS SUFFERED THE HARDSHIPS OF FOREST LIFE FOR LONG ENOUGH. NOW DO WHAT SEEMS PROPER TO YOU!



ALTHOUGH RAM WAS ANXIOUS TO ALLOW THE PEOPLE TO RETURN TO THE COMFORTS OF CITY LIFE, HE COULD NOT SAY SO DIRECTLY.

GURU VASISHTH CONVEYED RAM'S WORDS TO KING JANAK, WHO THEN WENT TO BHARAT. TOGETHER, ALL THE PEOPLE WENT TO RAM.

DEAR RAM, EVERYONE WILL DO AS YOU BID! THIS IS WHAT I HAVE DECIDED!

HOW CAN I SPEAK IN YOUR PRESENCE? I WILL DO AS YOU AND KING JANAK COMMAND.



NOW THE ASSEMBLY WAS STUNNED INTO SILENCE.

ALL EYES TURNED TO BHARAT.

I HAVE COME HERE WITH WATER FROM HOLY PLACES FOR YOUR CORONATION. NOW I WAIT FOR YOUR ORDERS.

YOU KNOW THE CUSTOM OF OUR SOLAR RACE, DEAR BHARAT. YOU MUST OBEY FATHER'S WORDS AND SO MUST I.



BHARAT VISITED SAGE ATRI'S ASHRAM AND DEPOSITED ALL THE HOLY WATER IN A WELL WHICH WAS THEN NAMED BHARAT KOOP.

FOR FIVE DAYS BHARAT VISITED ALL THE HOLY SPOTS AROUND. ON THE SIXTH DAY, THE ASSEMBLY PREPARED TO LEAVE.

GRANT ME LEAVE TO RETURN TO AYODHYA AND SERVE IT TILL YOU RETURN!

RULE THE LAND ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTIONS OF SAGE VASISHTH, THE MINISTERS AND OUR MOTHERS.



The Abduction of sita

THE PARTING OF BHARAT AND RAM WAS AS EMOTIONALLY CHARGED AS THEIR MEETING.



WHAT CAN I GIVE HIM AS A MEMENTO?

HERE, TAKE MY WOODEN SANDALS.

BHARAT RECEIVED THE SANDALS GRATEFULLY AND PLACED THEM ON HIS HEAD.



OH! WITH THIS KEEPSAKE WITH ME, I WILL FEEL AS IF RAM IS NEAR ME!

AFTER BIDDING FAREWELL TO HIS BROTHERS AND SETTLING THE QUEENS IN THEIR PALANQUINS, RAM SENT OFF JANAK'S PARTY.

HORSES, BULLOCKS, ELEPHANTS, CARRIAGES, PALANQUINS TRUDGED OUT OF THE FOREST BEARING THE RETINUE OF BHARAT AND JANAK.



IT'S SO STRANGE. JUST THREE OF US AGAIN!

IT WILL TAKE THEM FOUR DAYS TO REACH AYODHYA.

KING JANAK STAYED IN AYODHYA FOR A FEW DAYS AND SETTLED THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE.



I THINK, BHARAT, WITH THE HELP OF GURU VASISHTH, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MANAGE WELL.

I WILL TRY. BHATRUHNN, I WANT YOU TO TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WELFARE OF THE QUEENS.

GURU VASISHTH CHOSE AN AUSPICIOUS TIME AND DATE FOR THE CORONATION.



LET THE SANDALS OF MY BROTHER REPRESENT HIS REIGN OVER THE KINGDOM OF AYODHYA.

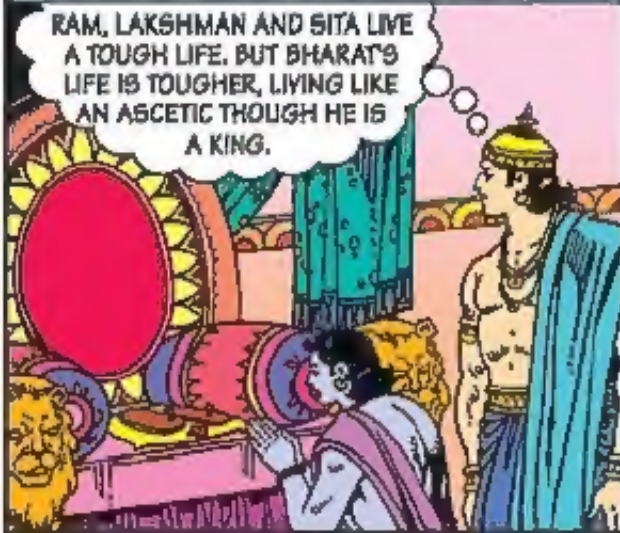
BHARAT CAST OFF HIS ROYAL ROBES AND JEWELS AND DECIDED TO LIVE LIKE A HERMIT.

HE MADE A SIMPLE HUT OF LEAVES AND TWIGS IN NANDIGRAM AND WORE CLOTHES OF BARK. HE GATHERED HIS HAIR IN A MATTED KNOT AND SLEPT ON A BED OF KUSHA GRASS.



HIS SPARTAN LIFESTYLE MADE HIM LEAN YET HIS FACE RADIATED SPIRITUAL STRENGTH.

HE LOOKED AFTER THE AFFAIRS OF THE STATE, AS HE HAD PROMISED. BUT HE CONSIDERED RAM TO BE THE TRUE KING AND SOUGHT HIS BLESSINGS FOR EVERY DECISION HE MADE.



MEANWHILE RAM, SITA AND LAKSHMAN HAD SETTLED DOWN TO THEIR SIMPLE ROUTINE IN THE IDYLIC FOREST HOME.



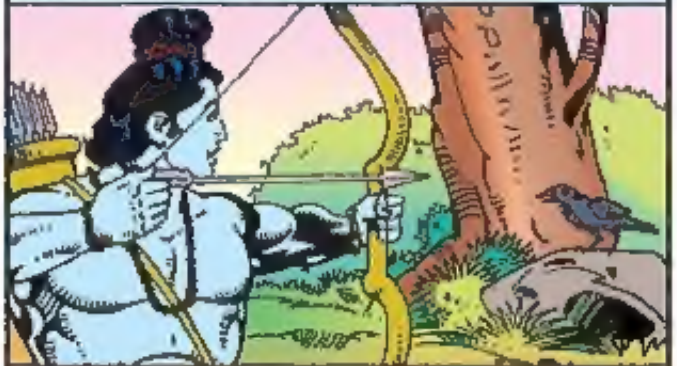
RAM BEDECKED SITA IN THE FLORAL ORNAMENTS HE LOVINGLY MADE FOR HER.

HOW LOVELY SHE LOOKED SEATED ON THE CRYSTAL ROCK, HER NATURAL BEAUTY ENHANCED BY THE LOVELY FLORAL JEWELLERY!



SUDDENLY A CROW BIT SITA ON HER FOOT. THE FOOLISH SON OF INDRA, IN THE DISGUISE OF A CROW WANTED TO TEST THE MIGHT OF RAM.

WHEN RAM SAW THE BLEEDING WOUND HE WAS ENRAGED AND TOOK UP HIS BOW AND ARROW, WHICH MADE THE CROW FLY OFF IN TERROR.



THE CROW PLEADED FOR MERCY AND RAM LET HIM GO WITH THE LOSS OF ONE EYE.

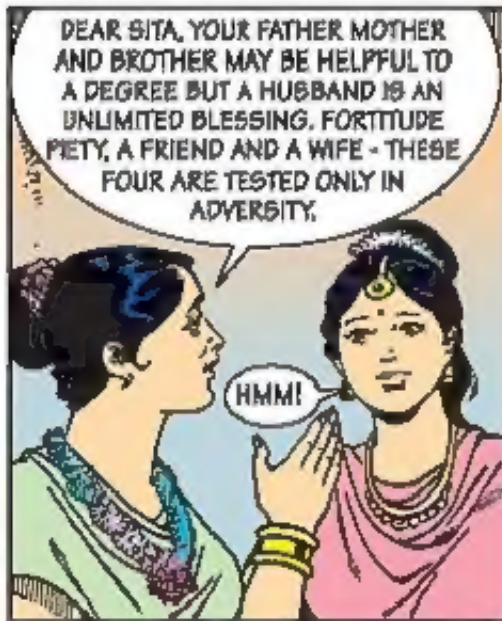


THE THREE OF THEM WENT TO SAGE ATRI'S ASHRAM WHERE THEY RECEIVED A WARM WELCOME. SAGE ATRI'S WIFE ANASUYA GAVE SITA A WONDERFUL PRESENT.



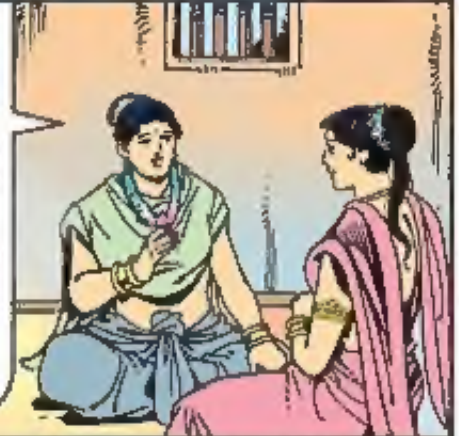
ANASUYA ALSO GAVE SITA A LOT OF ADVICE ON THE DUTIES OF A WIFE.

The Abduction of sita



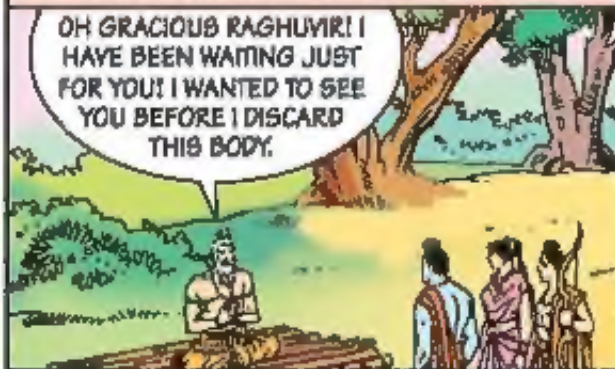
ANASUYA THEN GAVE SITA THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ABOUT THE GUIDING RULES FOR A WIFE.

THERE ARE FOUR GRADES OF WIVES. THE HIGHEST ARE THOSE WHO ARE CONVINCED IN THEIR HEART THAT NO OTHER MAN EXISTS IN THE WORLD. THE SECOND IN ORDER REGARD ALL OTHER MEN AS A FATHER, BROTHER OR SON. THE THIRD RESTRAINS HER BEHAVIOUR BY THE THOUGHT OF FAMILY HONOUR. THE FOURTH IS RESTRAINED BY FEAR AND LACK OF OPPORTUNITY.



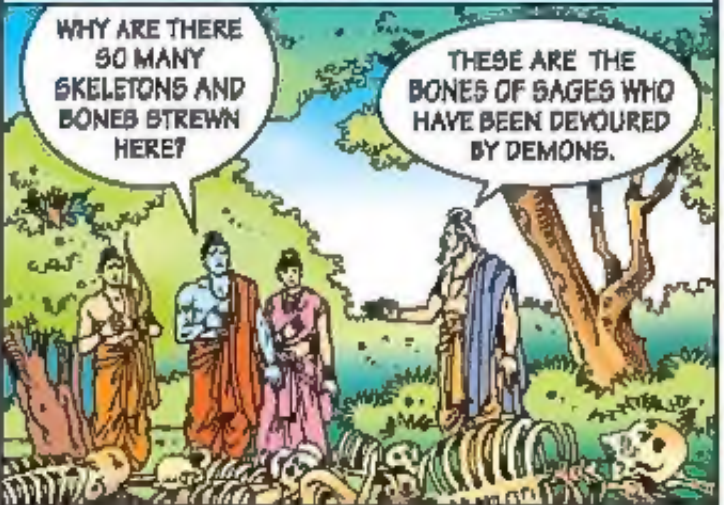
ANASUYA THEN EXPLAINED THAT SHE GAVE THE DISCOURSE FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD.

RAM, SITA AND LAKSHMAN BID FAREWELL TO SAGE ATRI AND ANASUYA AND MADE THEIR WAY TO THE HERMITAGE OF SHARABHANGA.



SAGE SHARABHANGA BUILT A FUNERAL PYRE AND SAT UPON IT AND AS HE HAD PLANNED, LEFT FOR THE HEAVENLY ABODE.

WHEN THE THREE OF THEM RESUMED THE JOURNEY, THEY MET A STRANGE SIGHT.



RAM'S EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. WITH HIS BOW ALOFT HE MADE A SOLEMN YOW.



RAM VISITED THE HERMITAGE OF SEVERAL SAGES. AMONG THEM WAS A DISCIPLE OF SAGE AGASTYA, CALLED BUTIKSHN.

WHEN HE HEARD THE NEWS OF RAM'S ARRIVAL, HE WAS BESIDES HIMSELF WITH JOY.



HE WAS SO OVERWHELMED THAT HE RAN HITHER AND THITHER AND BEGAN TO DANCE AND SING. RAM SAW HIS ANTICS FROM A DISTANCE.

WHEN AT LAST HE BEHELD RAM, SUTIKSHN SAT STILL IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREST PATH. HIS BODY BRISTLED LIKE A JACKFRUIT WITH EVERY HAIR ON END.



RAM ROUSED HIM FROM HIS STUPOUR AND EMBRACED HIM. TOGETHER THEY SET OUT TO MEET THE LEARNED SAGE AGASTYA.

RAM HAD A PURPOSE FOR MEETING AGASTYA.



PLEASE GUIDE ME. TELL ME THE WAY TO SLAY THE DEMONS, THE FOES OF HERMITS.

THERE IS A CHARMING HOLY SPOT CALLED PANCHAVATI IN THE DANDAK FOREST.

SO IT WAS, THAT RAM SET UP HIS HUMBLE HUT BY THE BANKS OF THE GODAVARI, IN PANCHAVATI.



IT WAS A TRANQUIL LIFE OF SIMPLE JOYS AND WARM COMPANIONSHIP, LAKSHMAN OFTEN SAT BESIDE RAM AND SHARED HIS INNERMOST THOUGHTS.

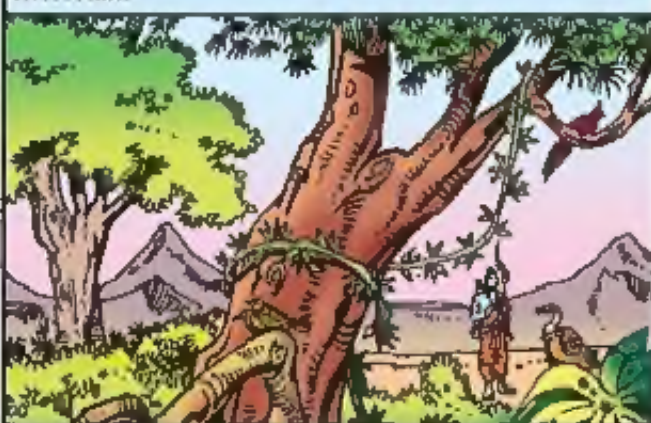


TELL ME THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL.

IT IS THE SENSE OF I AND YOU THAT HOLDS SWAY OVER INDIVIDUAL SOULS.

RAM LOVINGLY DESCRIBED THE PATH OF DEVOTION AND SPIRITUAL WISDOM.

IT WAS HERE THAT RAM MET JATAYU, THE KING OF VULTURES AND BUILT A BOND OF FRIENDSHIP WITH HIM.



IT SEEMED THAT THE MERE PRESENCE OF RAM MADE THE PLACE BLOOM, THE HILLS AND WOODS LOVELIER AND LUSH DAY-BY-DAY AND BIRDS CHIRPED CHEERFULLY.

ONE DAY THE PEACEFUL CALM OF PANCHAVATI WAS SHATTERED BY SHOORPANAKHA THE SISTER OF RAVAN, THE DEMON KING OF LANKA.



OH! SUCH HANDSOME MEN! I MUST TRY TO ATTRACT THEM!

SHOORPANAKHA HAD NAILS AS LARGE AS WINNOWING FANS AND A HIDEOUS FORM TO MATCH.

The Abduction of sita

SHE KNEW HOW HORRIBLE SHE LOOKED.

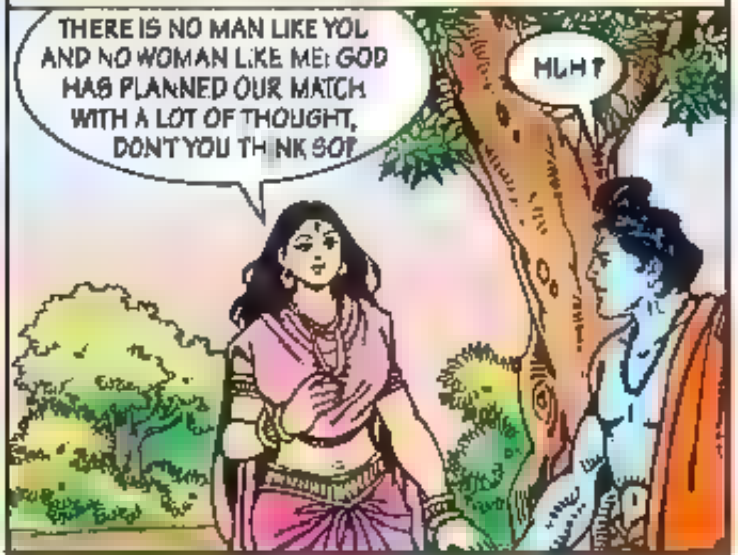
HMM! MY DEADLY DEMON LOOKS WILL SCARE THE WITS OUT OF THEM. I MUST TRANSFORM MYSELF INTO A LOVELY LASS!



IN AN INSTANT, SHE MADE HERSELF CHANGE INTO A LOVELY, DELICATE LADY.

SIMPERING SHYLY, SHE SIDLED UP TO RAM AND SPOKE IN THE SWEETEST TONE EVER.

THERE IS NO MAN LIKE YOU AND NO WOMAN LIKE ME! GOD HAS PLANNED OUR MATCH WITH A LOT OF THOUGHT, DON'T YOU THINK SO?



I HAVE SEARCHED THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD, BUT I HAVEN'T FOUND A MAN GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME. I THOUGHT, WOULD REMAIN A MAIDEN BUT NOW MEETING YOU HAS SET MY MIND AT REST! YOU ARE MY MAN!



RAM SUPPRESSED A SMILE AND SIGNALLLED AT SITA TO INDICATE THAT HE WAS MARRIED.

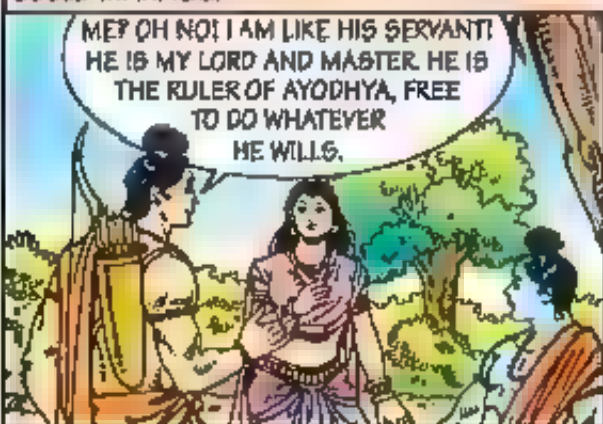
GRRR

BUT MY BROTHER IS FREE AND UNATTACHED!



SHOORPANAKHA NOW APPROACHED LAKSHMAN, OOOZING AS MUCH CHARM AS SHE COULD MANAGE.

ME? OH NO! I AM LIKE HIS SERVANT! HE IS MY LORD AND MASTER. HE IS THE RULER OF AYODHYA, FREE TO DO WHATEVER HE WILLS.



LAKSHMAN PICKED UP RAM'S PLAYFUL MOOD AND TEASED SHOORPANAKHA.

WITH A VERY SERIOUS EXPRESSION, LAKSHMAN GAVE A HUMBLE SPEECH.

HOW CAN A SERVANT ASPIRE FOR HAPPINESS? OR A BEGGAR EXPECT HONOUR OR ..

STOP IT! ENOUGH!



SHOORPANAKHA WAS IN NO MOOD FOR A DISCOURSE AND TURNED BACK TO RAM.

RAM SENT HER BACK TO LAKSHMAN, WHO DECIDED TO BE FRANK WITH HER.

THE ONLY MAN WHO WILL BE A MATCH FOR YOU IS THE ONE WHO HAS FLUNG ALL SHAME TO THE WINDS!

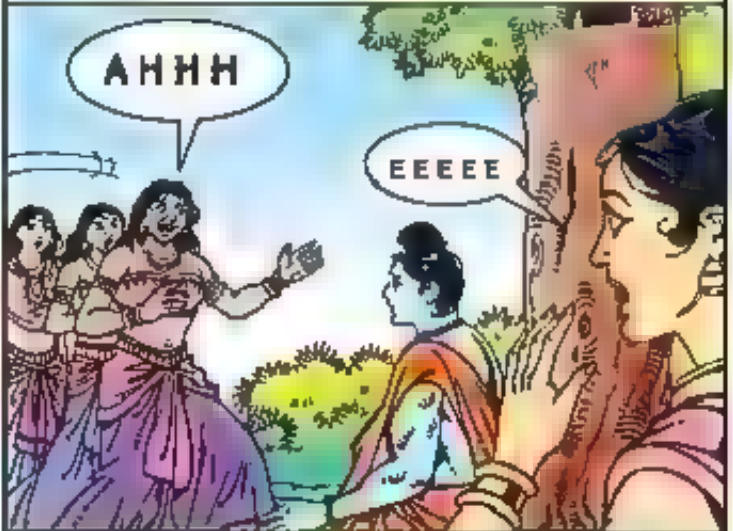


SHOORPANAKHA DID NOT LIKE BEING TOSSED ABOUT AND INSULTED IN THIS MANNER.

SHE TURNED TO RAM IN FURY AND SHOWED HER ORIGINAL HIDEOUS FORM.

AHHH

EEEEEE



SITA WAS PETRIFIED TO SEE THE HORRIBLE DEMONESS.

RAM SAW HOW AGITATED SITA WAS AND SIGNALLED TO LAKSHMAN. AT ONCE, LAKSHMAN DREW HIS SWORD....



...AND IN SWIFT STROKES, CUT OFF SHOORPANAKHA'S NOSE AND EARS.

LOOKING MORE FRIGHTFUL THAN BEFORE, SHOORPANAKHA RAN OFF HOWLING LOUDLY.



IT LOOKED AS IF SCARLET STREAMS WERE FLOWING DOWN A BLACK MOUNTAIN.

SOBBING LOUDLY, SHE WENT TO HER DEMON BROTHERS, KHAR AND DUSHAN.

O BROTHERS! THIS IS A CURSE ON YOUR MANHOOD AND MIGHT.

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

WHO DID THIS TO YOU?

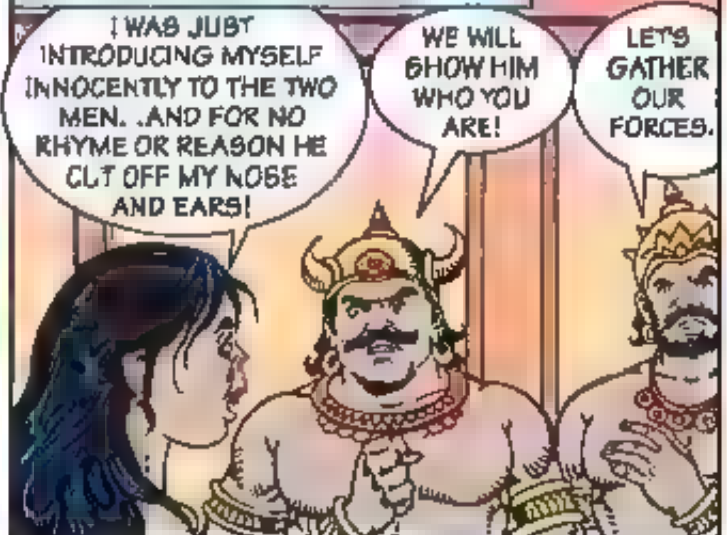


SHOORPANAKHA TOLD THEM IN DETAIL, HER VERSION OF THE INCIDENT.

I WAS JUST INTRODUCING MYSELF INNOCENTLY TO THE TWO MEN. AND FOR NO RHYME OR REASON HE CUT OFF MY NOSE AND EARS!

WE WILL SHOW HIM WHO YOU ARE!

LET'S GATHER OUR FORCES.



The Abduction of sita

KHAR AND DUSHAN CALLED THEIR ARMY TO GATHER FOR ATTACK. HUGE UGLY MONSTERS OF VARIOUS SHAPES AND SIZES APPEARED LIKE A GROUP OF WINGED HILLS OF BLACK SOOT.



THEY HAD STRANGE ANIMALS ON THERE VEHICLES AND WERE ARMED TO THE HILT WITH DREADFUL WEAPONS.

ROARING LOUDLY, THE GROTESQUE CREATURES TOOK TO THE SKIES, RARING TO FIGHT.

WE WILL CATCH THE TWO BROTHERS ALIVE.

NO! NO! LET'S KILL THEM!

LET'S KIDNAP THE WOMAN.



THEY RAISED SUCH A STORM WITH THEIR MARCH IN THE SKIES THAT RAM WAS ALERTED.

AN ARMY OF DEMONS IS APPROACHING. LAKSHMAN! QUICKLY TAKE SITA TO THE CAVE AND BE ON GUARD.

BUT-BUT...



LAKSHMAN LED SITA TO A CAVE IN THE MOUNTAIN, WHILE RAM GATHERED HIS MATTED LOCKS INTO A KNOT.

RAM WAS READY WITH HIS BOW AND ARROW ALOFT.

NO BUTS, LAKSHMAN, HURRY! I WILL TAKE THEM ON ALONE!

AS YOU SAY.



WITH A QUIVER FULL OF ARROWS SLUNG ON HIS SIDE, HE GLARED AT THE APPROACHING DEMON ARMY, AS A LION GLARES AT A GROUP OF ELEPHANTS.

THE DEMONS DESCENDED DRAMATICALLY FROM THE HIGH SKIES BUT AS SOON AS THEY SAW RAM, THEY WERE FROZEN IMMOBILE AND COULD NOT ATTACK HIM.



THEY HAD A HURRIED MEETING WITH THEIR MINISTERS AND THEIR CHIEFS, KHAR AND DUSHAN.

THIS PRINCE IS EXTRAORDINARY.

WE HAVE KILLED MULTITUDES OF MEN, DEVAS, SAGES AND DEMONS. BUT THIS ONE IS DIFFERENT.

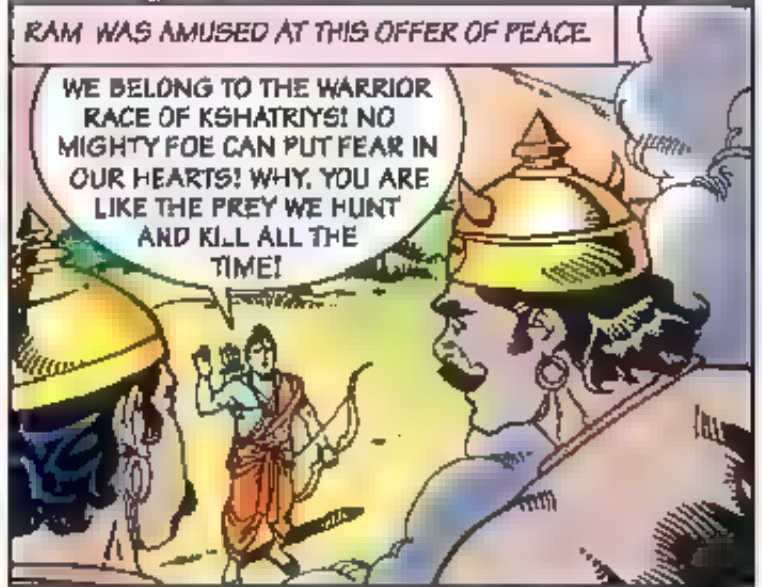
HE DOES NOT DESERVE TO BE KILLED.



THEY DECIDED TO OFFER HIM A TRUCE.



SURRENDER TO US
AT ONCE! GIVE US
THE WOMAN YOU
HAVE HIDDEN AND
YOU TWO
BROTHERS CAN
GO HOME
UNHURT.

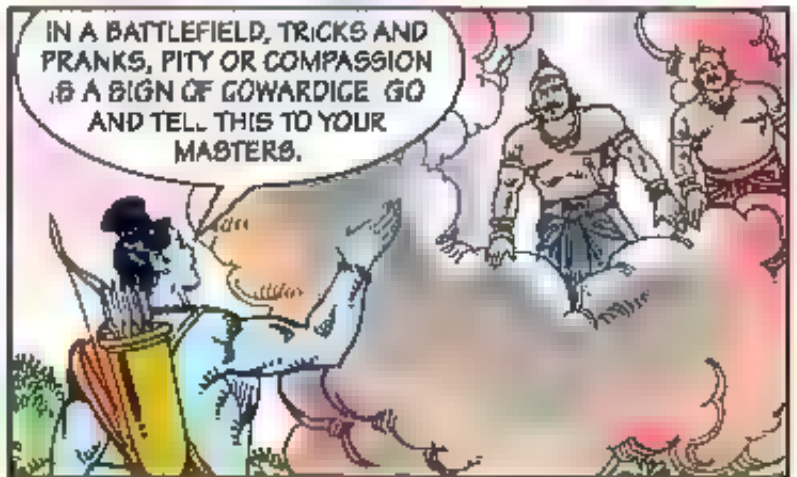


RAM WAS AMUSED AT THIS OFFER OF PEACE.

WE BELONG TO THE WARRIOR
RACE OF KSHATRIYS! NO
MIGHTY FOE CAN PUT FEAR IN
OUR HEARTS! WHY, YOU ARE
LIKE THE PREY WE HUNT
AND KILL ALL THE
TIME!



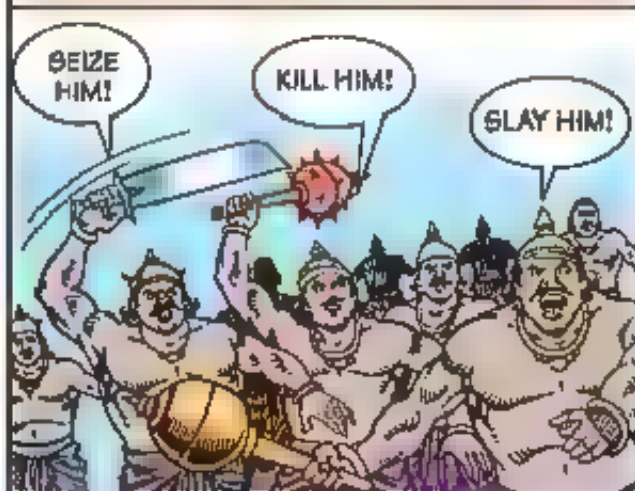
EVEN DEATH ITSELF,
DOESN'T PUT FEAR
IN US!
IF YOU ARE SCARED
TO FIGHT US, RUN
OFF! I WILL NEVER
ATTACK AN ENEMY
WHO HAS HIS
BACK TURNED.



IN A BATTLEFIELD, TRICKS AND
PRANKS, PITY OR COMPASSION
IS A SIGN OF COWARDICE. GO
AND TELL THIS TO YOUR
MASTERS.

RAM'S WORDS STUNG KHAR AND DUSHAN TO THE CORE.
THEY ORDERED THEIR ARMY TO ATTACK.

WITH BOWS AND ARROWS, STEEL CLUBS AND
AXES, SPEARS AND PIKES, SCIMITARS AND
MACES, THE FIERCE DEMONS TOOK TO THE SKIES.



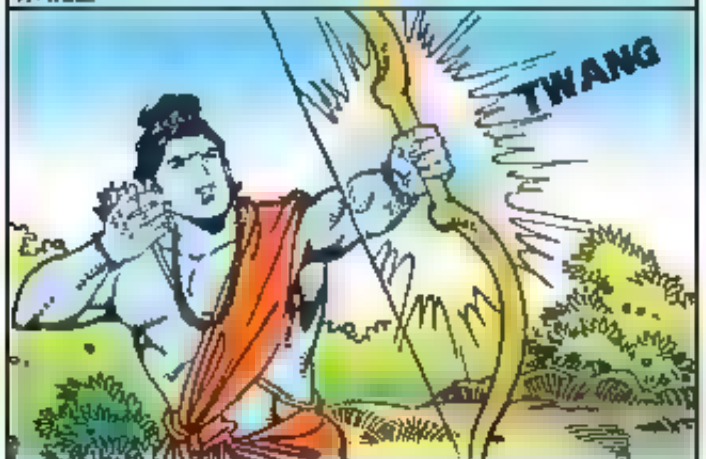
SEIZE
HIM!

KILL HIM!

SLAY HIM!

BUT JUST THE TWANG OF RAM'S BOW WAS
ENOUGH TO PUT FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS.

THE TERRIFIC, SHRILL FRIGHTENING SOUND
DEAFENED THEIR EARS AND AGITATED THEIR MINDS
SO MUCH THAT THEY LOST THEIR SENSES FOR A
WHILE.

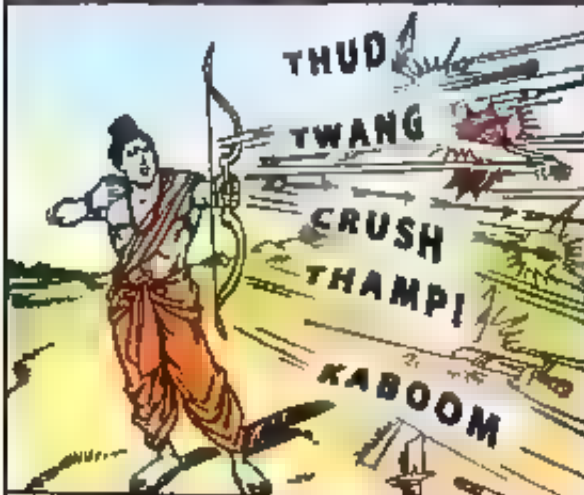


TWANG

WHEN THEY RECOVERED, THEY BEGAN TO RAIN THEIR
WEAPONS ON THEIR SOLE OPPONENT ON THE
GROUND.

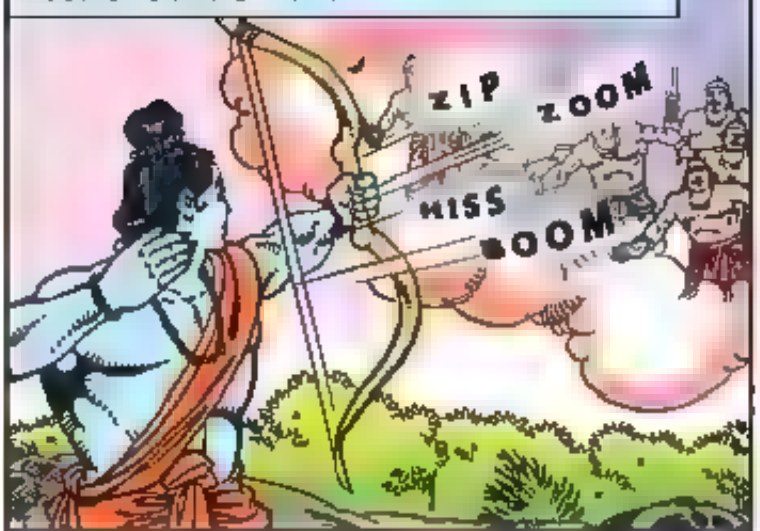
The Abduction of sita

BUT WITH HIS SPEED AND SKILL, RAM CRUSHED ALL THEIR WEAPONS INTO SMITHEREENS.



DRAWING HIS BOWSTRING UP TO HIS EAR, RAM DISCHARGED HIS SHARP ARROWS.

THE DEMON WARRIORS FELT THAT THE TERRIBLE ARROWS OF RAM WERE LIKE VICIOUS SERPENTS HISSING TOWARDS THEM.



THE DEMON ARMY TOOK FRIGHT AND BEGAN TO FLEE.

SEEING THE ARMY RETREATING, THEIR LEADERS KHAR AND DUSHAN ROARED.



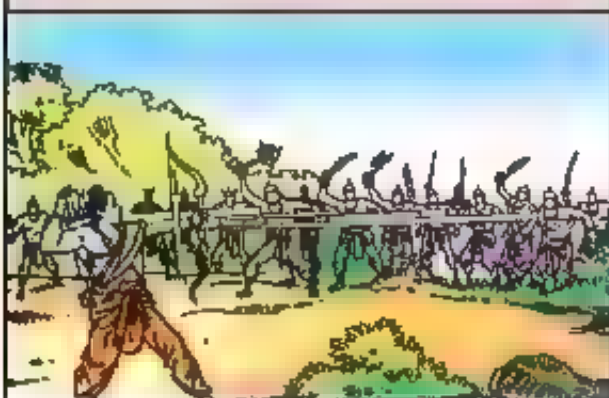
REALISING THAT DEATH WAS CERTAIN IN ANY CASE, THE DEMON WARRIORS BEGAN TO ATTACK RAM AGAIN.

RAM NOW CHOSE A SPECIAL WEAPON, AN IRON BOLT CALLED NARACHA AND FITTED IT TO HIS BOW STRING. THE SHARP ARROWS CUT THE DEMONS UP.



THERE WAS A SHOWER OF ARMS, LEGS, HEADS AND TORSOS FALLING PELL-MELL TO THE GROUND.

BUT WITH THE DEMONIC MAGIC, THE WARRIORS WERE REVIVED. NOW THE DEMONS BEGAN TO FIGHT ON LAND, WITH SPEARS AND SCIMITARS. THEIR RANKS SWELLED MAGICALLY SO THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE 14,000 DEMONS FIGHTING THE LONE RAM.

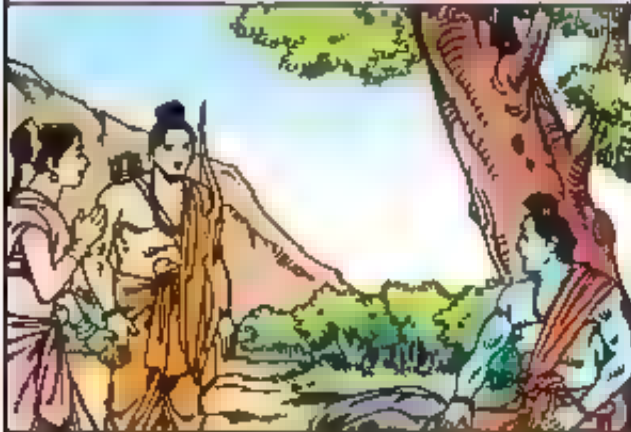


IN TURN RAM CREATED AN ILLUSION SO THAT THE DEMONS SAW THE FORM OF RAM IN EACH OTHER. DECEIVED INTO BELIEVING THAT THEY WERE ATTACKING RAM, THEY ATTACKED AND KILLED EACH OTHER.



SO IT WAS THAT IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE ARMY WAS DECIMATED AND LAY DEAD.

LAKSHMAN BROUGHT SITA BACK AND SHE GAZED AT THE DARK HUED RAM WITH UTMOST AFFECTION, RELIEVED TO SEE HIM UNHURT AFTER THE ORDEAL.



PEACE REIGNED AT PANCHAVATI AND THEY RESUMED THEIR SIMPLE LIFE OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

WHEN SHE REALISED THAT KHAR AND DUSHAN WERE KILLED, SHOORPANAKHA DECIDED TO GO TO HER BROTHER RAVAN, THE KING OF LANKA.



RAVAN COULD NOT FATHOM THE REASON FOR HER RAGE.



AS SHE APPROACHED CLOSER TO THE THRONE RAVAN AND THE COURTIER'S NOTICED THAT SHE WAS WOUNDED AND BLEEDING.



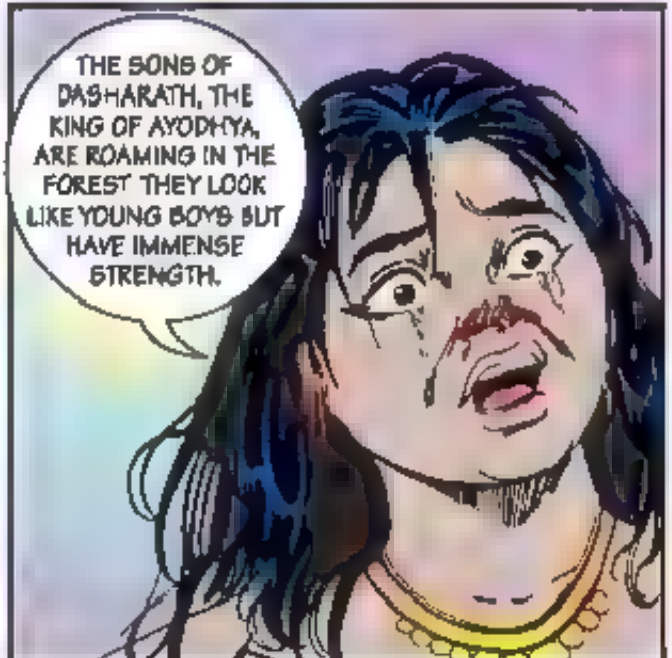
SHE FLUNG HERSELF DOWN WHILE SOBBING LOUDLY.

HER LAMENTATION AND LOOKS ROUSED THE ENTIRE COURT TO SYMPATHY AND ANGER. THEY HELPED HER TO GET UP AND CONSOLED HER.

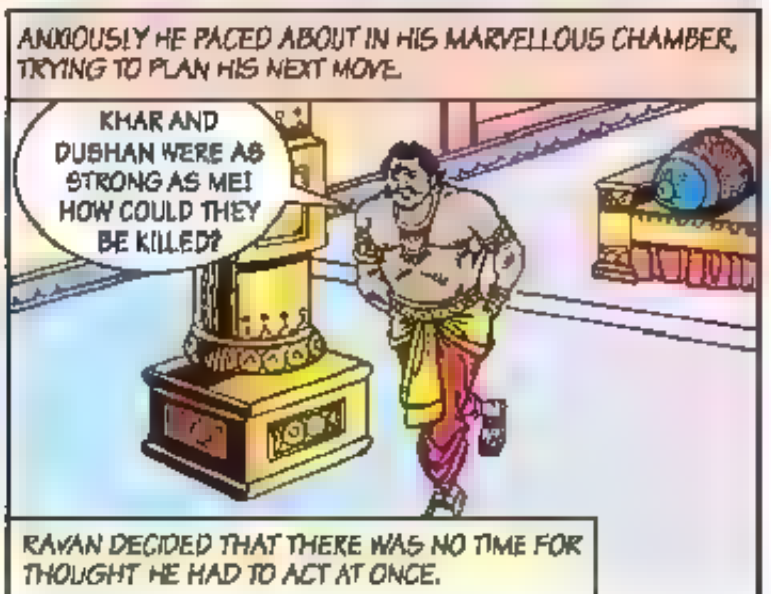
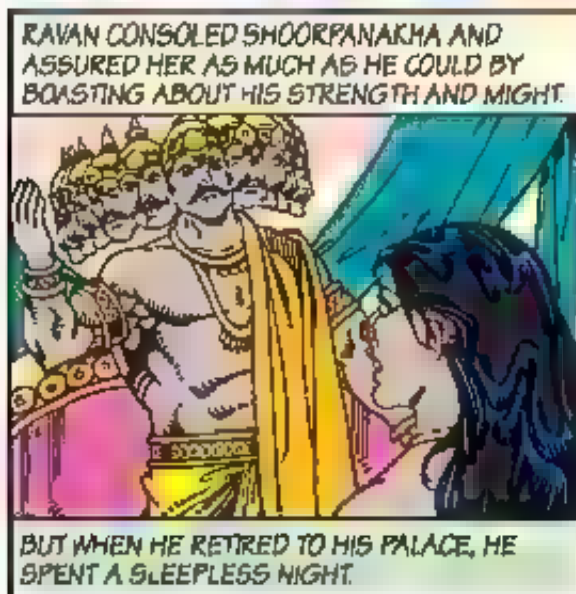
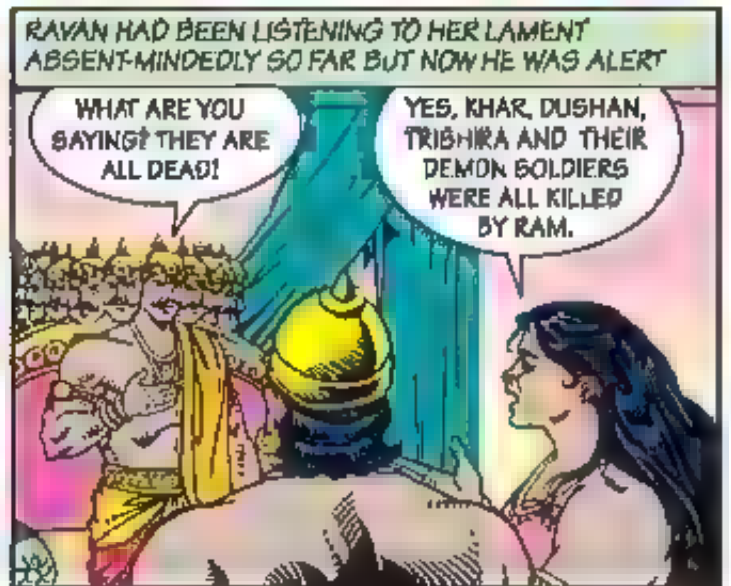
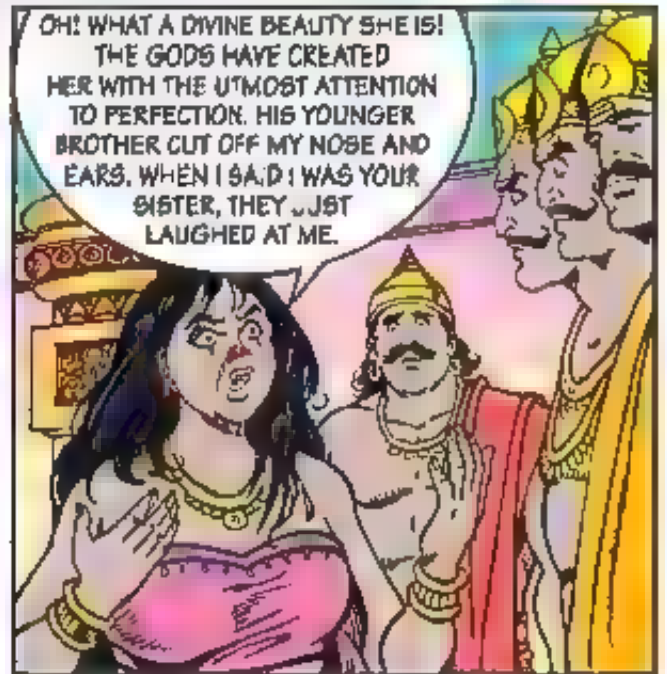
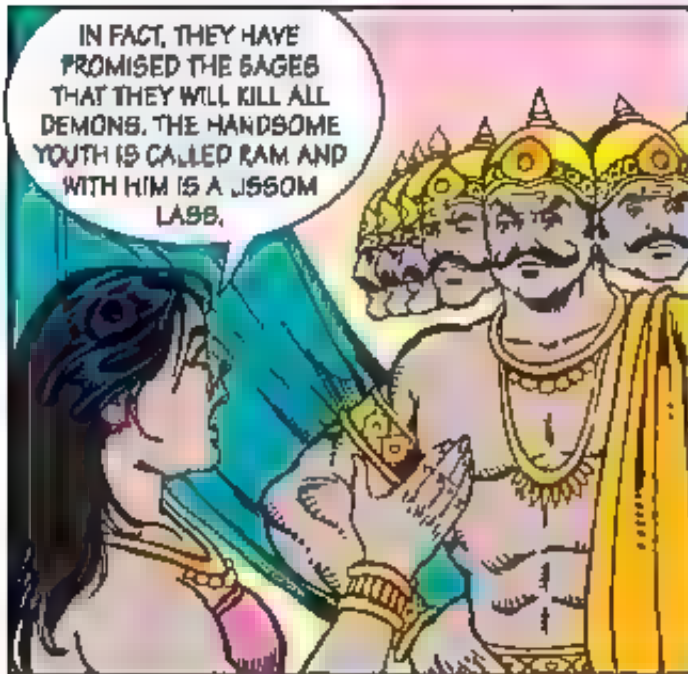


SHOORPANAKHA KNEW SHE COULD PERSUADE RAVAN TO ATTACK RAM.

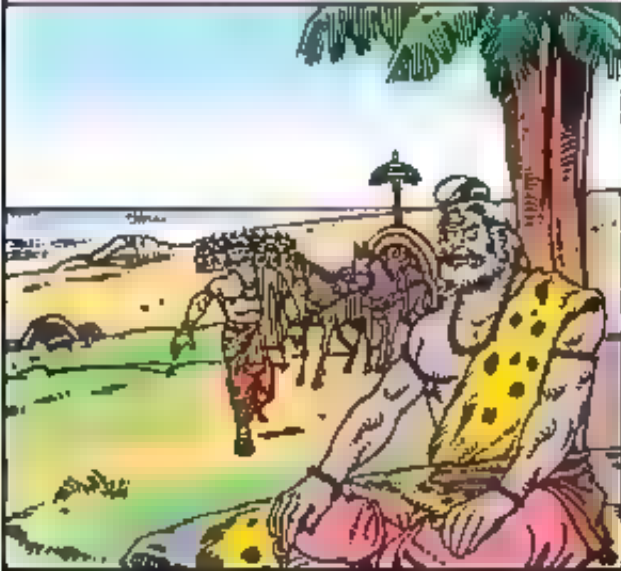
THE SONS OF DASHARATH, THE KING OF AYODHYA, ARE ROAMING IN THE FOREST THEY LOOK LIKE YOUNG BOYS BUT HAVE IMMENSE STRENGTH.



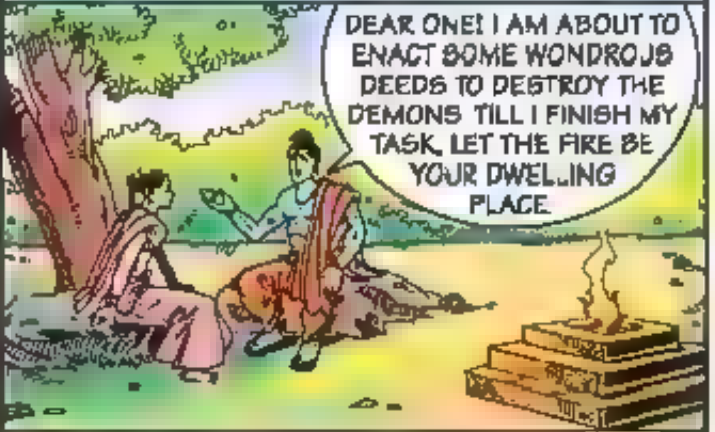
The Abduction of sita



ALONE, HE MOUNTED HIS CHARIOT AND DROVE TO THE SEASHORE WHERE MARICH LIVED.



MEANWHILE, DEEP IN THE FOREST, RAM AND SITA SAT IN THEIR SIMPLE HUT WHILE LAKSHMAN WENT TO COLLECT ROOTS, FRUITS AND BULBS.



DEAR ONE! I AM ABOUT TO ENACT SOME WONDROUS DEEDS TO DESTROY THE DEMONS TILL I FINISH MY TASK, LET THE FIRE BE YOUR DWELLING PLACE.

THE REAL SITA ENTERED THE SAFE SANCTUM OF THE FIRE, LEAVING BEHIND AN EXACT REPLICA IN THE HUT. NO ONE KNEW OF THIS EXCEPT RAM AND SITA.

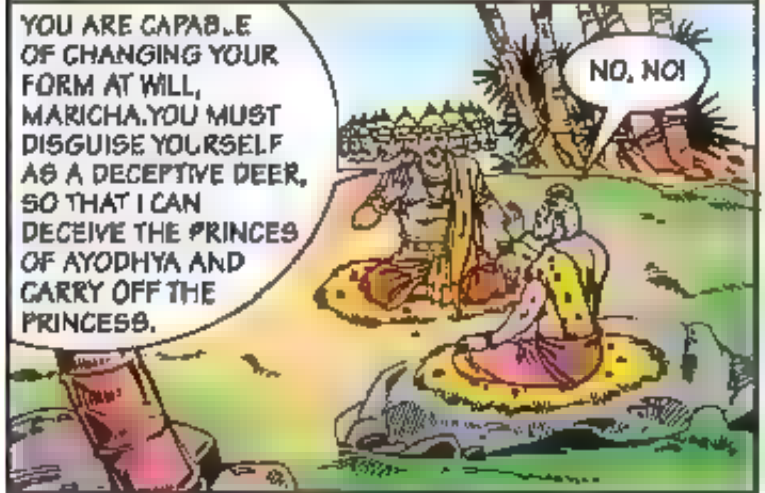
RAVAN'S VISIT SURPRISED MARICH.

WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE ALONE, AT THIS HOUR? WHY ARE YOU SO AGITATED AND WORRIED?



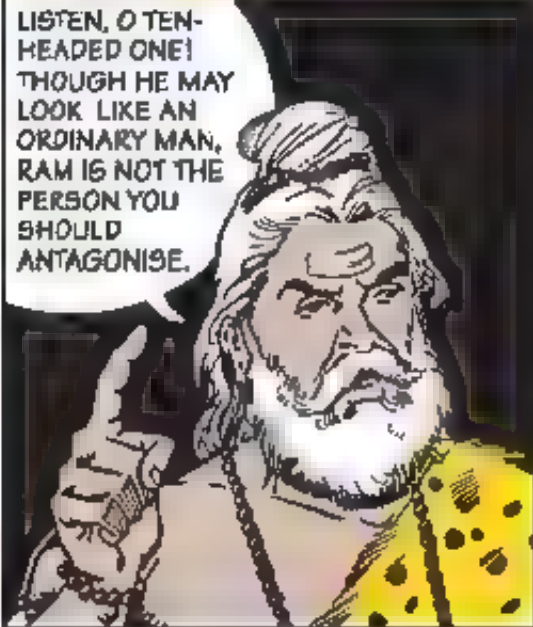
HE THEN UNFOLDED HIS PLAN TO MARICH.

YOU ARE CAPABLE OF CHANGING YOUR FORM AT WILL, MARICHA. YOU MUST DISGUISE YOURSELF AS A DECEPTIVE DEER, SO THAT I CAN DECEIVE THE PRINCES OF AYODHYA AND CARRY OFF THE PRINCESS.



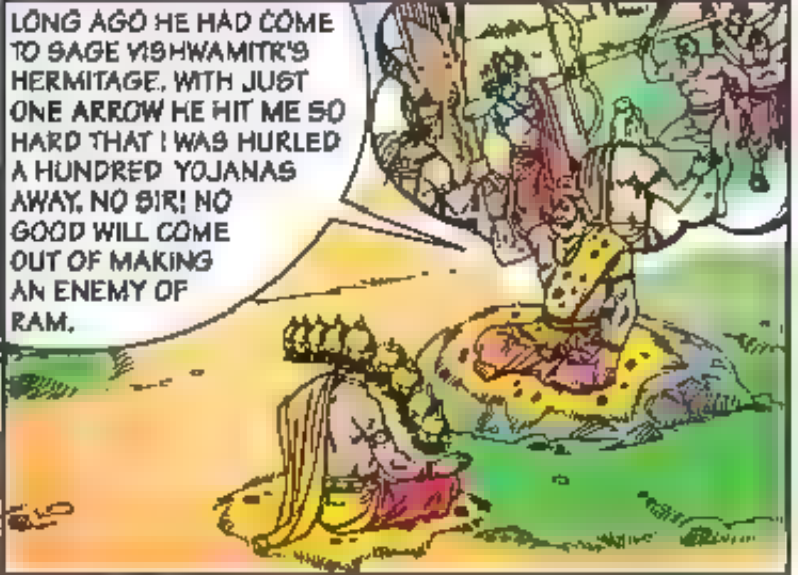
NO, NO!

LISTEN, O TEN-HEADED ONE! THOUGH HE MAY LOOK LIKE AN ORDINARY MAN, RAM IS NOT THE PERSON YOU SHOULD ANTAGONISE.



MARICH RECALLED HIS EARLIER ENCOUNTER WITH RAM.

LONG AGO HE HAD COME TO SAGE VISHWAMITR'S HERMITAGE, WITH JUST ONE ARROW HE HIT ME SO HARD THAT I WAS HURLED A HUNDRED YOJANAS AWAY. NO SIR! NO GOOD WILL COME OUT OF MAKING AN ENEMY OF RAM.



The Abduction of sita

MARICH SHIVERED WITH FRIGHT AT THE VERY THOUGHT OF CONFRONTING RAM AGAIN.

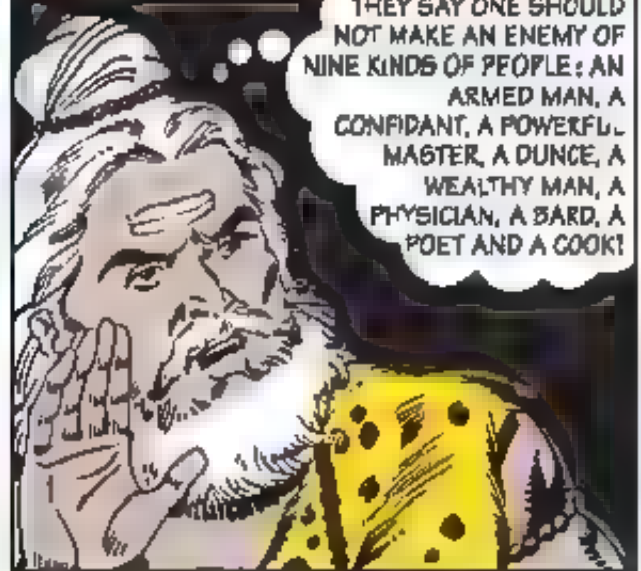
THINK ABOUT IT. HE IS THE ONE WHO KILLED BLBAHU AND TADAKA, AND BLEW KHAR AND DUSHAN. HE BROKE THE MIGHTY BOW OF SHIV. CAN HE BE AN ORDINARY MORTAL? GO HOME, IF YOU WISH WELL FOR YOUR PEOPLE.

G R R R!
YOU FOOL! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? MY GURU? IS THERE A WARRIOR OF MY MATCH IN THE WORLD?

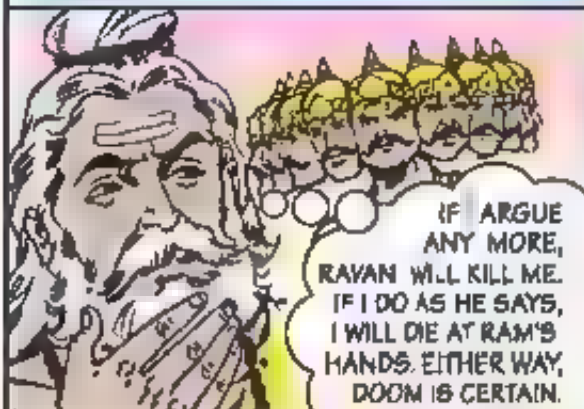


MARICH REALISED THAT HIS WELL MEANT COUNSEL WAS FALLING ON DEAF EARS.

THEY SAY ONE SHOULD NOT MAKE AN ENEMY OF NINE KINDS OF PEOPLE: AN ARMED MAN, A CONFIDANT, A POWERFUL MASTER, A DUNCE, A WEALTHY MAN, A PHYSICIAN, A BARD, A POET AND A COOK!



MARICH WAS NOW TRULY ON THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA.



IF I ARGUE ANY MORE, RAVAN WILL KILL ME. IF I DO AS HE SAYS, I WILL DIE AT RAM'S HANDS. EITHER WAY, DOOM IS CERTAIN.

HAVING MADE HIS CHOICE, HE DECIDED TO FOLLOW RAVAN.

RAVAN LED MARICH TO THE DENSE DANDAK FOREST, WHERE SHOORPANAKHA HAD MET HER ILL FATE.



THIS IS WHERE THE THREE ARE LIVING. YOU MUST LURE RAM AWAY WITH YOUR CLEVER

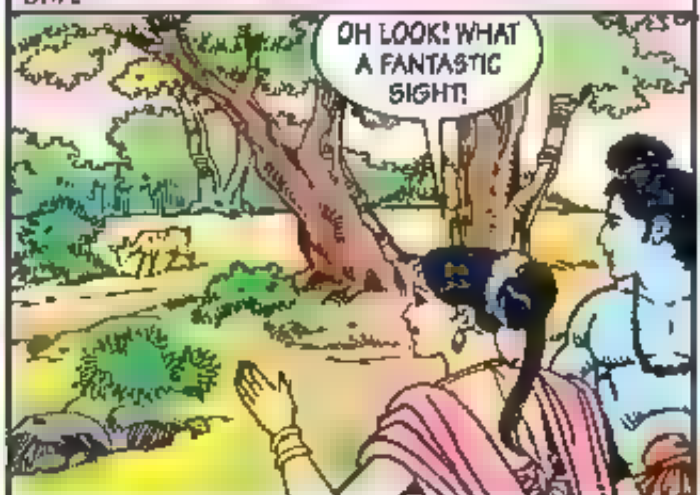
TRICKS

MARICH USED HIS MIRACULOUS POWERS AND IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, TURNED INTO A MARVELLOUS GOLDEN DEER, STUDDED WITH GEMS



ON TWINKLE TOES, THE GOLDEN DEER DANCED TO THE HUMBLE HUT WHERE RAM AND SITA LIVED.

CLEVERLY CONCEALING HIMSELF AMONG THE BUSHES, THE DAZZLING DEER GAVE A TANTALISING GLIMPSE TO SITA.



OH LOOK! WHAT A FANTASTIC SIGHT!

SITA WAS CAPTIVATED BY THE SIGHT OF THE DEER AND COAXED RAM TO GO AFTER IT

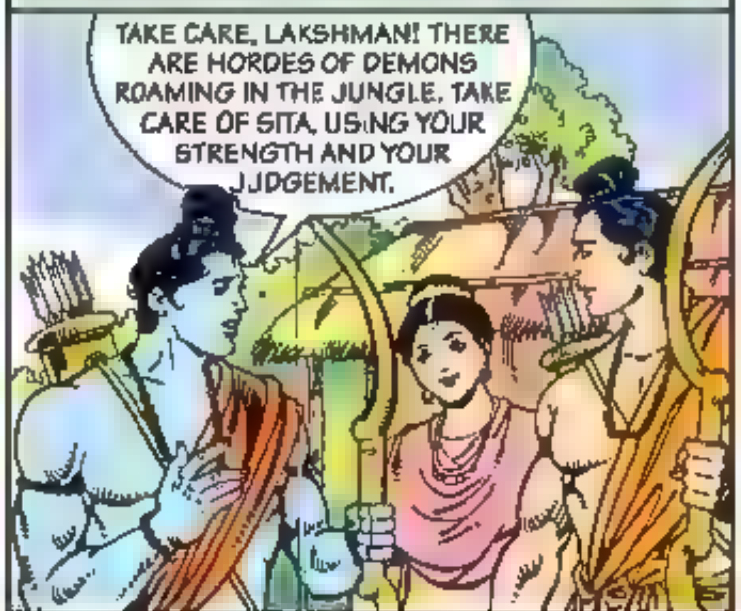
PLEASE, PLEASE
GET THE SKIN OF
THAT DEER FOR ME,
MY LORD!



RAM TOOK UP HIS BOW AND ARROWS AND SET
OUT TO HUNT THE GOLDEN DEER.

WHILE LEAVING THE ASHRAM, HE CAUTIONED LAKSHMAN.

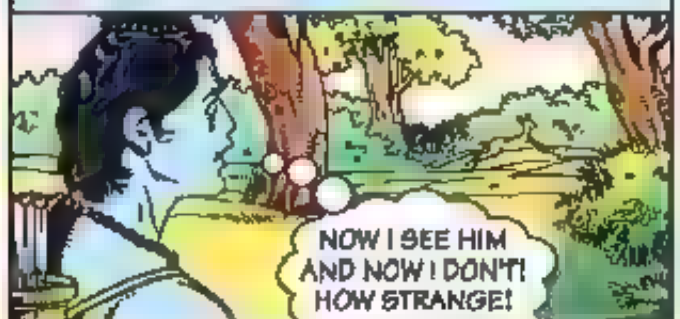
TAKE CARE, LAKSHMAN! THERE
ARE HORDES OF DEMONS
ROAMING IN THE JUNGLE. TAKE
CARE OF SITA, USING YOUR
STRENGTH AND YOUR
JUDGEMENT.



RAM RAN AFTER THE GOLDEN DEER. BUT AS SOON
AS IT SAW RAM APPROACHING, THE DEER TOOK
FLIGHT WITH RAM CLOSE BEHIND.



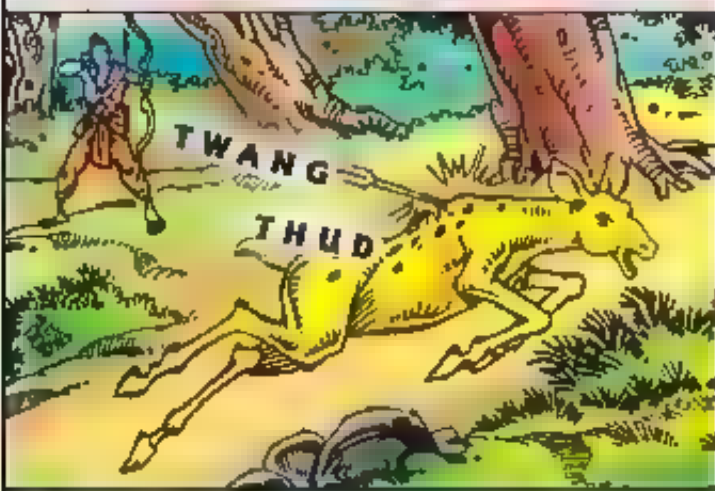
RAM WAS READY WITH HIS BOW ALOFT BUT THE
DEER WAS UP TO STRANGE TRICKS.



NOW I SEE HIM
AND NOW I DON'T!
HOW STRANGE!

SOMETIMES THE DEER APPEARED WITHIN REACH
AND THE NEXT MOMENT, FAR AWAY IN THE DEPTH
OF THE FOREST.

WITH HIS WILY WAYS, THE DECEPTIVE DAZZLING DEER
LED RAM FAR AWAY FROM THE HUT. THEN AT LAST, RAM
TOOK AIM AND WITH ONE ARROW, FELLEED HIM.



WITH A FEARFUL CRY, THE GOLDEN DEER COLLAPSED
ON THE GROUND.

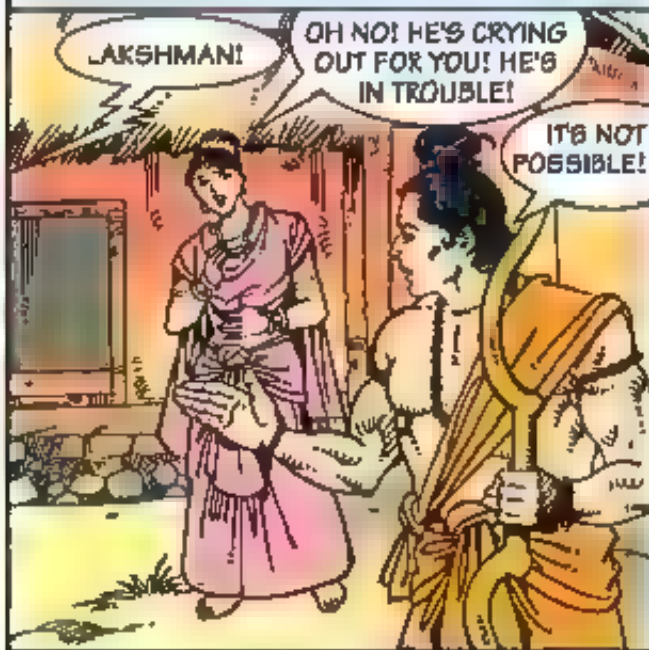
BUT EVEN AS IT FELL, IT CRIED OUT ALOUD IN
RAM'S VOICE.



THEN AS LIFE EBBED OUT OF HIM, HE
ASSUMED HIS REAL FORM AS MARICH.

The Abduction of sita

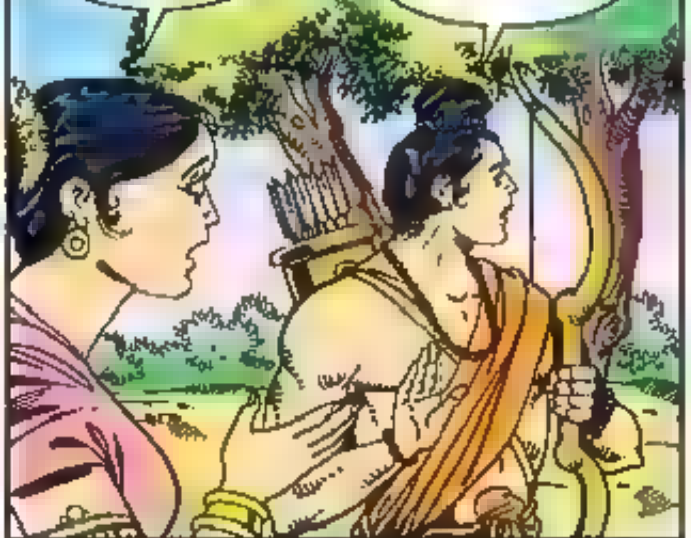
AT THE HUT, SITA HEARD RAM'S VOICE CRYING OUT FOR LAKSHMAN.



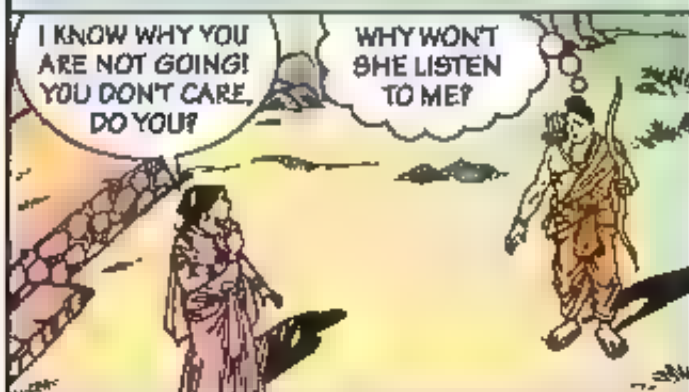
SITA WAS SCARED AND WORRIED.

HURRY UP AND GO! YOUR BROTHER IS IN GREAT DANGER!

I KNOW RAM WELL! HE CANNOT BE IN TROUBLE!

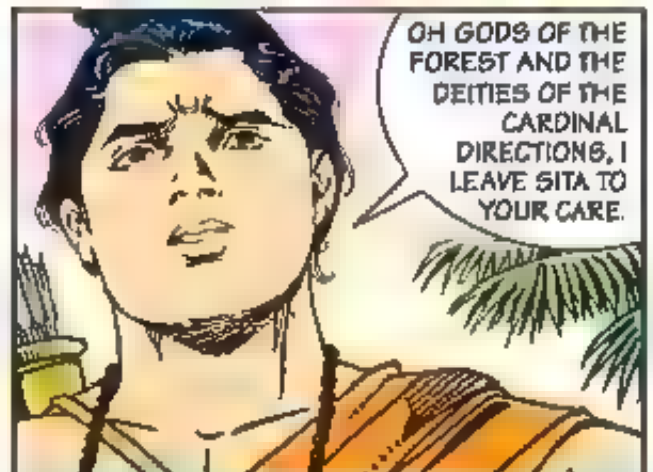


BUT SITA WOULD NOT LISTEN TO LAKSHMAN'S CALM RESPONSE. SHE INSISTED HE SHOULD GO AT ONCE.



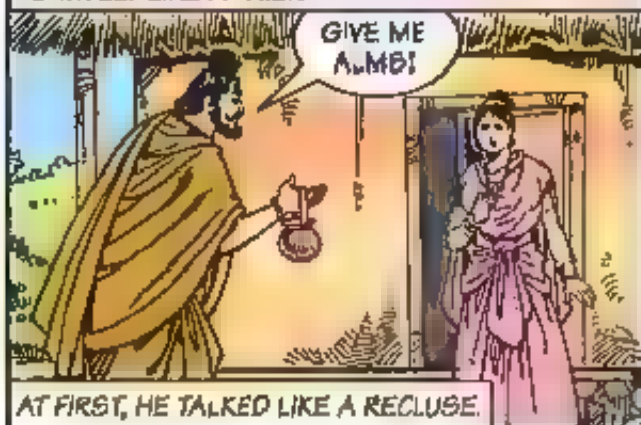
LAKSHMAN REALISED THAT HE WAS BEING FORCED TO GO IN SEARCH OF RAM.

OH GODS OF THE FOREST AND THE DEITIES OF THE CARDINAL DIRECTIONS, I LEAVE SITA TO YOUR CARE.



LAKSHMAN RAN IN THE DIRECTION, FROM WHICH THEY HAD HEARD THE CRIES.

AS SOON AS LAKSHMAN WAS OUT OF SIGHT AND EAR SHOT, THE WICKED RAVAN DISGUISED AS A HERMIT, APPROACHED THE HUT, GLANCING FURTIVELY LIKE A THIEF.

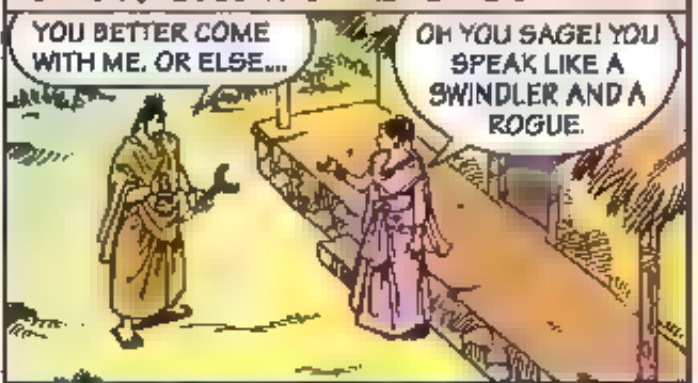


AT FIRST, HE TALKED LIKE A RECLUSE.

BUT SOON HE BEGAN TO TELL ALLURING STORIES TO PERSUADE SITA TO LEAVE WITH HIM. WHEN THAT DID NOT WORK, HE BEGAN TO THREATEN HER.

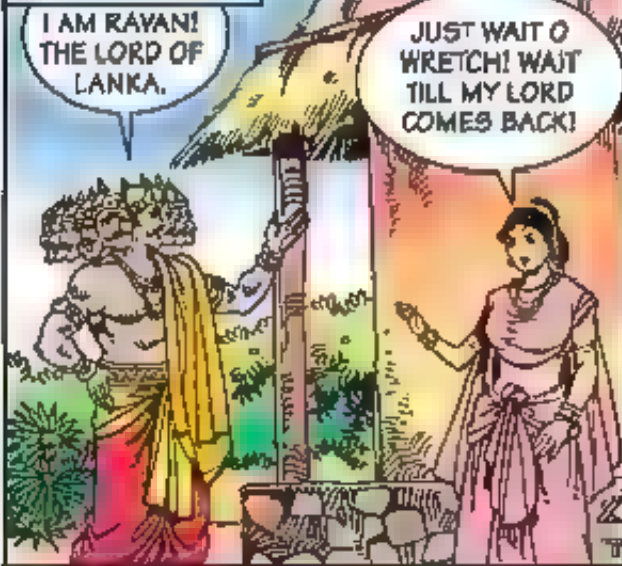
YOU BETTER COME WITH ME. OR ELSE...

OH YOU SAGE! YOU SPEAK LIKE A SWINDLER AND A ROGUE.



RAVAN REALISED THAT HIS DISGUISE WAS DOING HIM NO GOOD.

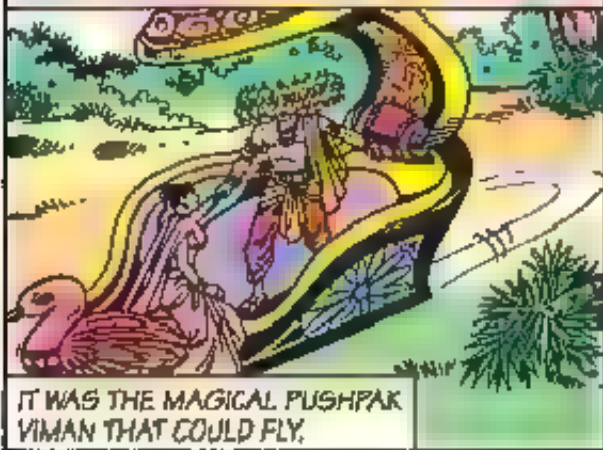
HE ASSURED HIS ORIGINAL TEN HEADED-DEMON FORM AND LOOMED LARGE BEFORE THE SCARED SITA.



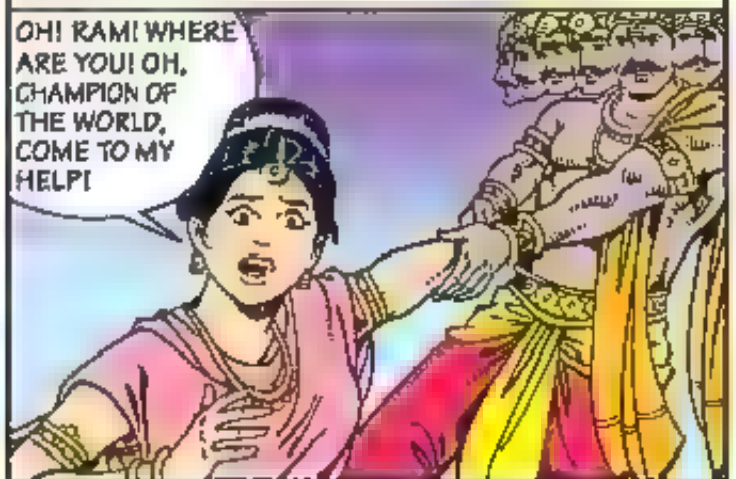
SITA GATHERED COURAGE AT THE THOUGHT OF RAM.



NOW THE ENRAGED RAVAN PULLED SITA FORCIBLY, FLUNG HER INTO HIS CHARIOT AND TOOK TO THE SKIES.



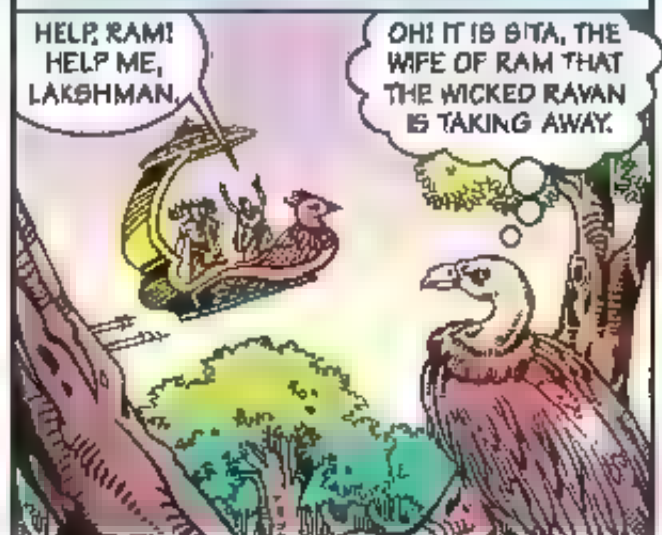
RAVAN WAS SO AGITATED THAT HE COULD BARELY STEER THE VEHICLE AND SITA CRIED ALOUD RELENTLESSLY.



SITA REMEMBERED HOW SHE HAD FORCED LAKSHMAN TO GO AWAY.



AS THE CHARIOT FLEW OVER THE SYLVAN WOODS, THE KING OF VULTURES, JATAYU, SAW IT.

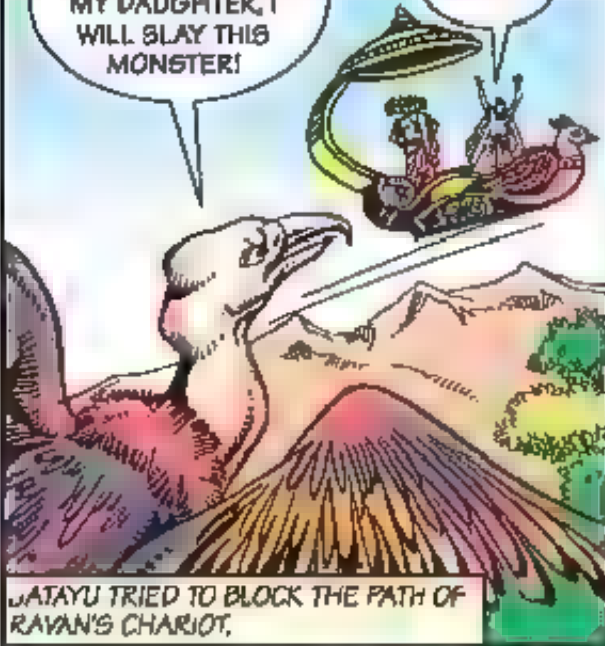


The Abduction of sita

JATAYU HURLED HIMSELF TOWARDS THE SKY LIKE A THUNDERBOLT HITTING A CLIFF

DON'T WORRY, SITA MY DAUGHTER, I WILL SLAY THIS MONSTER!

HELP!

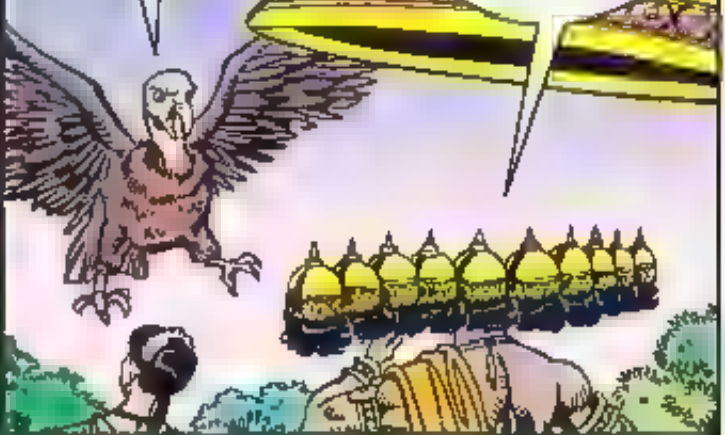


JATAYU TRIED TO BLOCK THE PATH OF RAVAN'S CHARIOT.

BRAVELY HE CHALLENGED RAVAN

YOU VILAIN! STOP! HOW DARE YOU GO AHEAD! DON'T YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

WHAT IS THIS? IS IT THE MAINAK MOUNTAIN OR THE KING OF VULTURES?

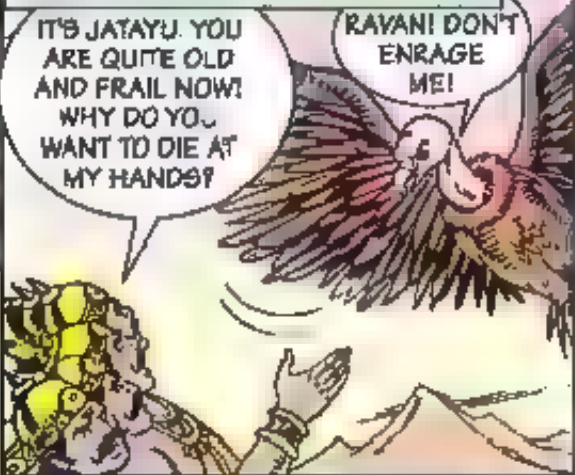


MAINAKA WAS THE ONLY MOUNTAIN THAT HAD WINGS. GOD INDRA WAS SAID TO HAVE CLIPPED THE WINGS OF ALL OTHER MOUNTAINS.

WHEN JATAYU CAME CLOSER, RAVAN RECOGNISED HIM.

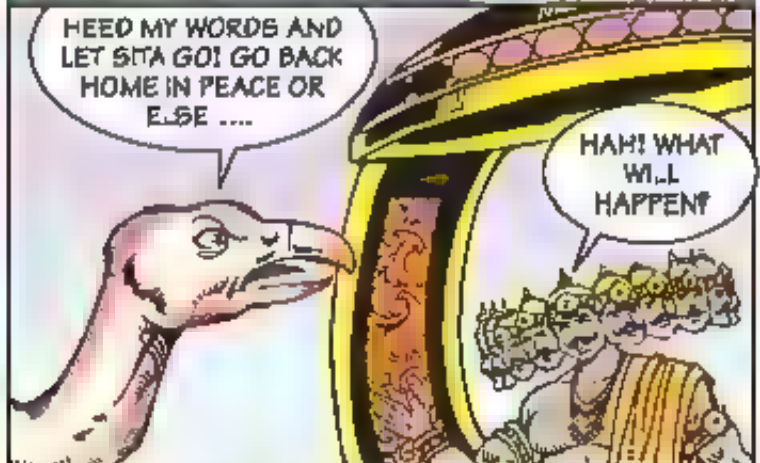
IT'S JATAYU. YOU ARE QUITE OLD AND FRAIL NOW! WHY DO YOU WANT TO DIE AT MY HANDS?

RAVANI! DON'T ENRAGE ME!



HEED MY WORDS AND LET SITA GO! GO BACK HOME IN PEACE OR ELSE

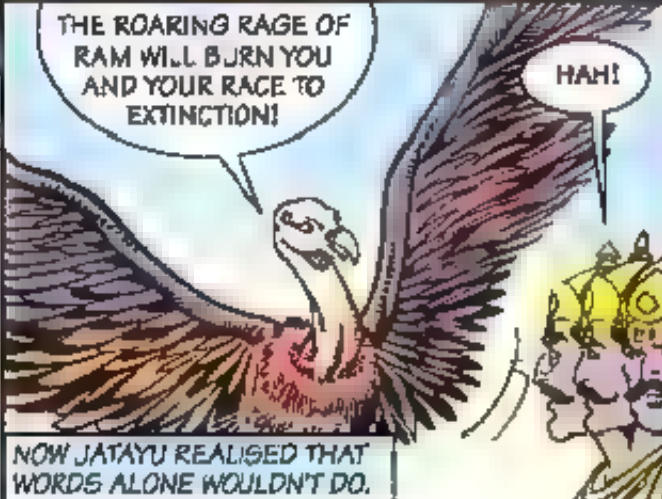
HAH! WHAT WILL HAPPEN?



JATAYU FLUTTERED HIS MIGHTY WINGS AND FURIOUSLY CIRCLED THE CHARIOT.

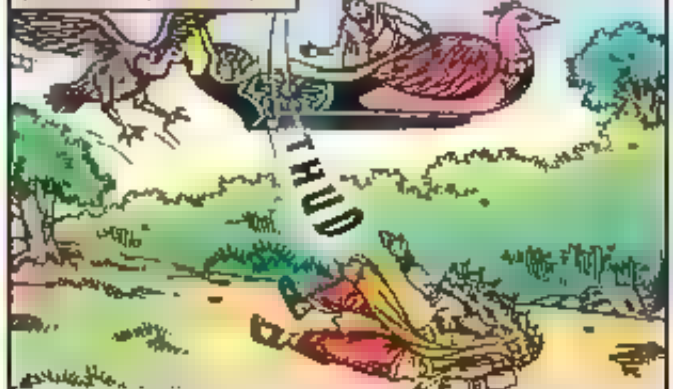
THE ROARING RAGE OF RAM WILL BURN YOU AND YOUR RACE TO EXTINCTION!

HAH!



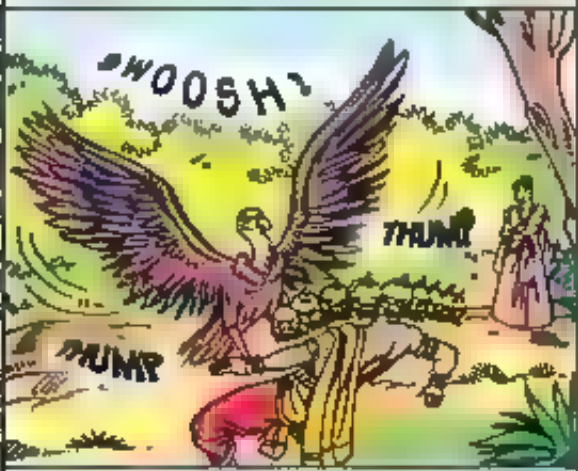
NOW JATAYU REALISED THAT WORDS ALONE WOULDN'T DO.

PULLING RAVAN BY THE HAIR, JATAYU YANKED HIM OUT OF THE CHARIOT



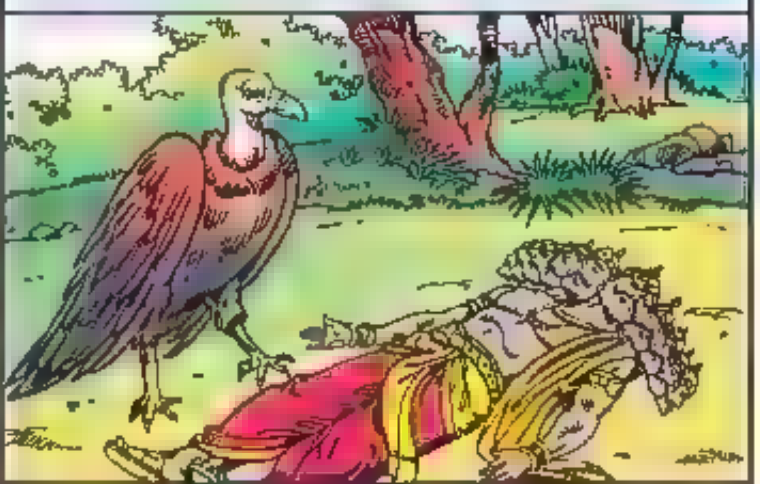
RAVAN FELL HEAVILY DOWN TO THE GROUND.

JATAYU CAREFULLY PLACED SITA IN THE SHELTER OF A TREE AND CONFRONTED RAVAN.



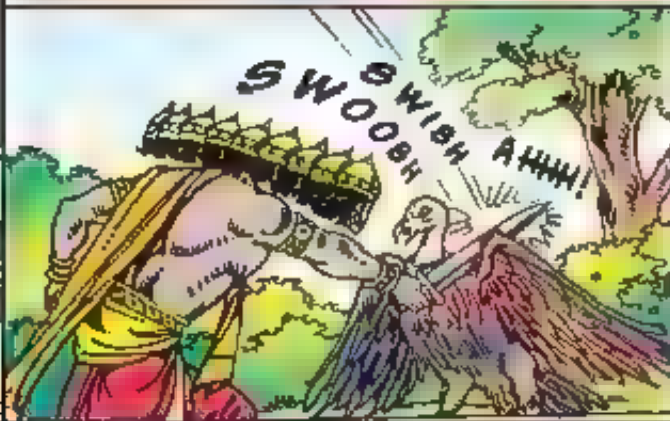
JATAYU HIT RAVAN REPEATEDLY WITH HIS BEAK.

FOR OVER HALF AN HOUR RAVAN LAY UNCONSCIOUS IN A SWOON BECAUSE OF THE BATTLE WITH JATAYU.



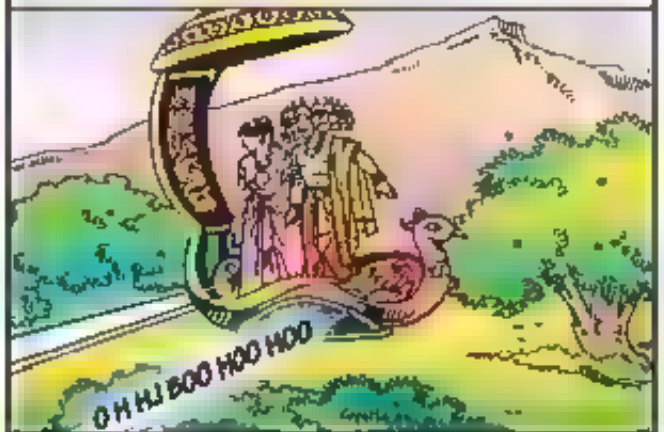
BUT WHEN HE CAME TO, HIS ANGER KNEW NO BOUNDS.

RAVAN DREW HIS SWORD AND CUT OFF THE WINGS OF THE BRAVE BIRD.



WOUNDED AND HELPLESS, JATAYU FELL TO THE GROUND.

RAVAN PULLED SITA BACK INTO THE CHARIOT AND SPED OFF. SHE WAS CRYING LIKE A HELPLESS HUNTED DEER, CAUGHT IN A TRAP.



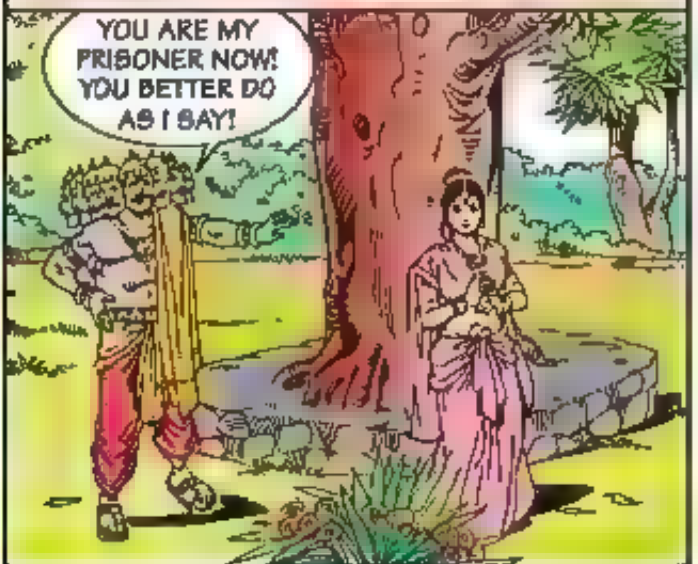
ON THE WAY, SHE SAW A GROUP OF MONKEYS, SEATED ON A HILL.

I'LL DROP ONE OF MY GARMENTS HERE! PERHAPS IT MAY HELP RAM TO FIND ME.



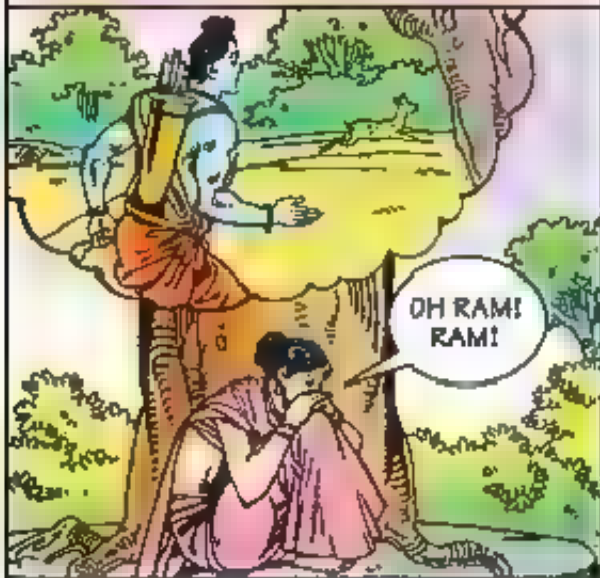
RAVAN NOW FLEW NON-STOP TO HIS OWN KINGDOM OF LANKA. THERE HE PLACED SITA UNDER AN ASHOK TREE.

YOU ARE MY PRISONER NOW! YOU BETTER DO AS I SAY!



The Abduction of sita

SITA SAT UNDER THE ASHOK TREE, REMEMBERING RAM AS SHE HAD SEEN HIM LAST, RUNNING AFTER THE GOLDEN DEER.



RAM RETURNING TO THE FOREST HOME WAS SURPRISED TO SEE LAKSHMAN COMING TOWARDS HIM.

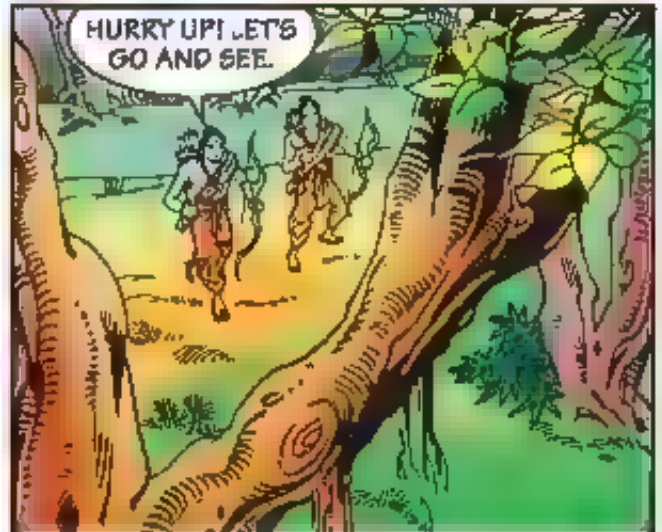


YOU KNOW THAT THE
FOREST IS FULL OF
FIERCE DEMONS!
I FEAR SHE MAY
NOT BE IN THE
ASHRAM
NOW!



LAKSHMAN CLASPED RAM'S FEET AND BEGGED FORGIVENESS.

HURRY UP! LET'S
GO AND SEE.



RAM AND LAKSHMAN FOUND SITA MISSING AT THE ASHRAM.

AGITATED BY HER ABSENCE, RAM BEGAN TO WAIL ALOUD.

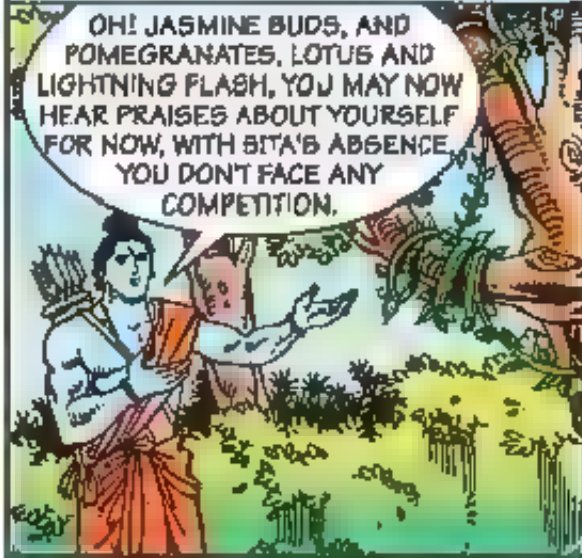


RAM WAS QUITE BESIDE HIMSELF AND BEGAN TO SPEAK TO THE BIRDS AND BEES OF THE FOREST.

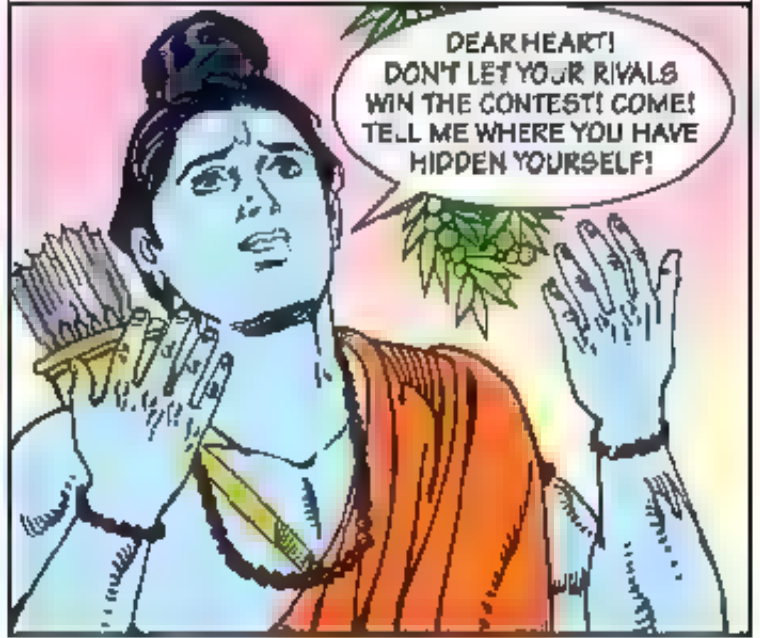


THOUGH WOEBEGONE, RAM WAS LYRICAL IN HIS LAMENTATIONS.

OH! JASMINE BUDS, AND POMEGRANATES, LOTUS AND LIGHTNING FLASH, YOU MAY NOW HEAR PRAISES ABOUT YOURSELF FOR NOW, WITH SITA'S ABSENCE, YOU DON'T FACE ANY COMPETITION.



DEAR HEART! DON'T LET YOUR RIVALS WIN THE CONTEST! COME! TELL ME WHERE YOU HAVE HIDDEN YOURSELF!



RAM AND LAKSHMAN WALKED ALL AROUND THE FOREST, SEARCHING FOR SOME SIGN OF SITA.

LOOK! WHAT'S OUT THERE?

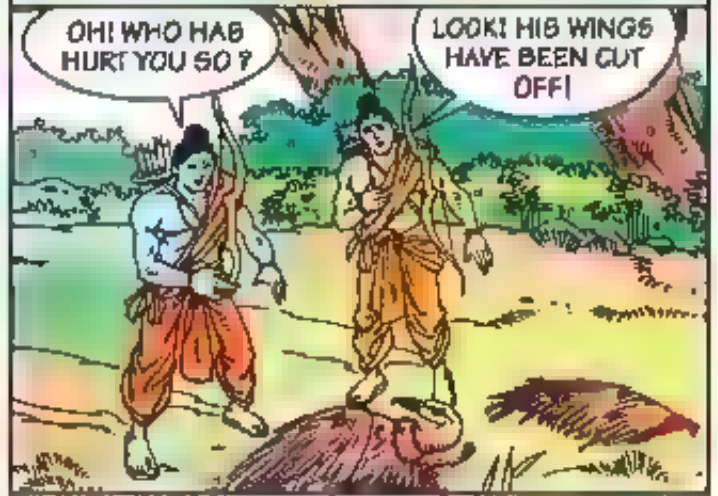
IT LOOKS LIKE JATAYU, OUR FRIEND.



THEY RUSHED AHEAD TO FIND THE VULTURE LYING INJURED ON THE GROUND, GASPING FOR BREATH.

OH! WHO HAS HURT YOU SO?

LOOK! HIS WINGS HAVE BEEN CUT OFF!



JATAYU GATHERED HIS EBBING STRENGTH AND WHISPERED URGENTLY.

IT WAS THE TEN-HEADED ONE WHO WOUNDED ME.

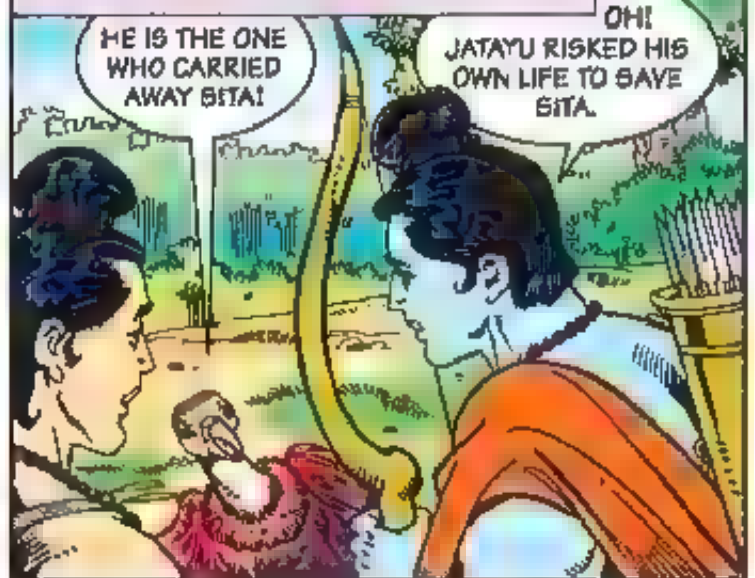
OH! RAVAN! WHY DID HE DO THIS?



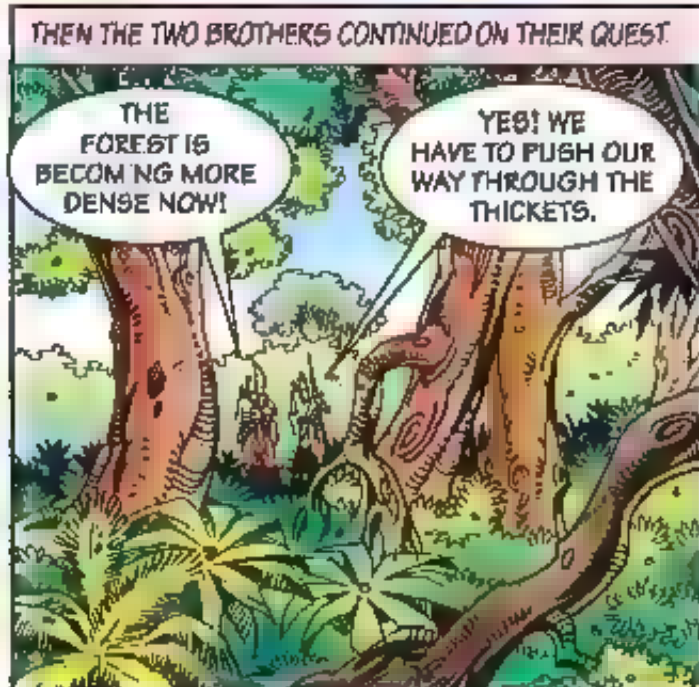
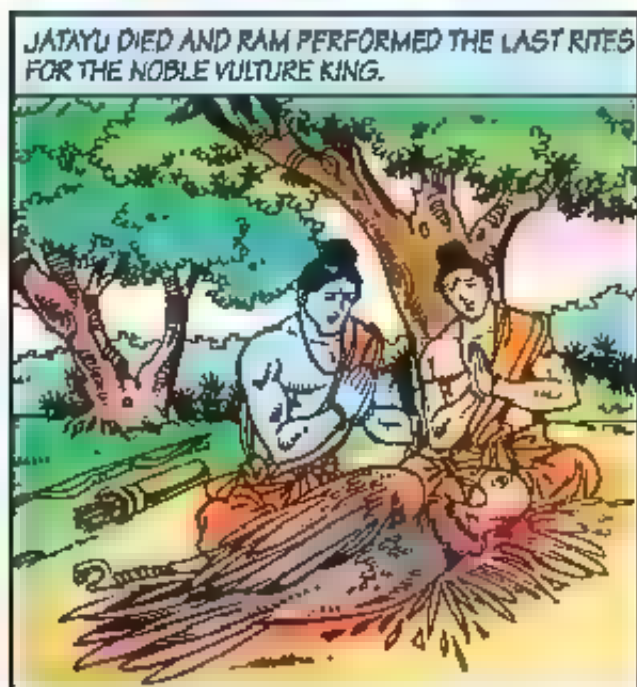
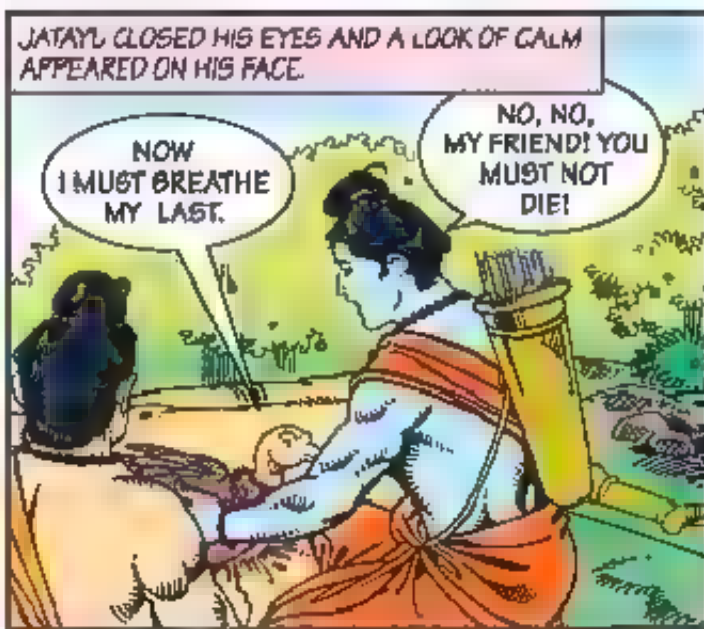
RAM BENT DOWN TO CATCH JATAYU'S WORDS.

HE IS THE ONE WHO CARRIED AWAY SITA!

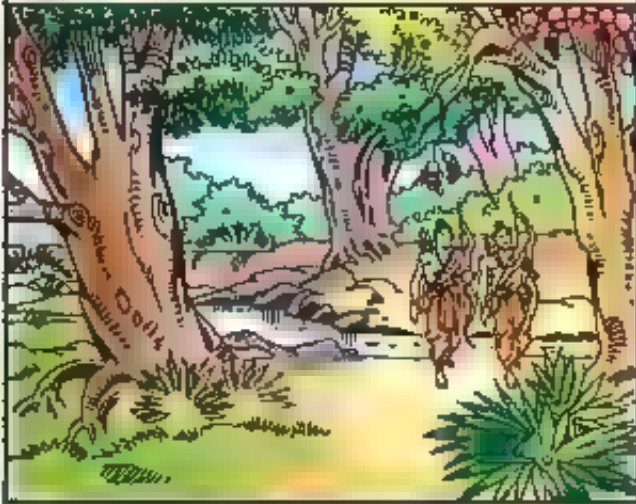
OH! JATAYU RISKED HIS OWN LIFE TO SAVE SITA.



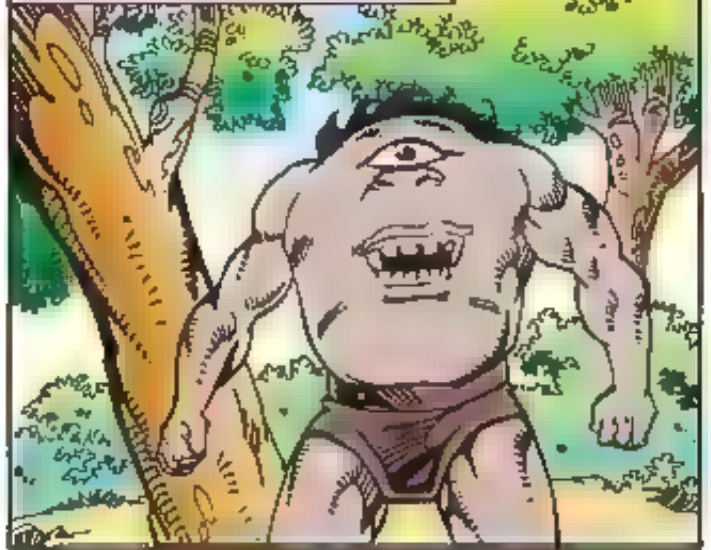
The Abduction of sita



IN THE THICK JUNGLE, POPULATED BY MANY BIRDS, DEER, LIONS AND ELEPHANTS, THE TWO BROTHERS CAME ACROSS A STRANGE SIGHT



IT WAS KABANDH, THE DEMON.



RAM EASILY OVERPOWERED HIM.



IT WAS THEN THAT KABANDH RELATED HIS TALE.

I AM A GANDHARY ACTUALLY! BUT IT WAS THE CURSE OF SAGE DURYASA THAT TURNED ME TO A DEMON.



NOW I HAVE BEEN RELEASED FROM THAT CURSE, I CAN GO BACK WHERE I BELONG.

FARE THEE WELL.

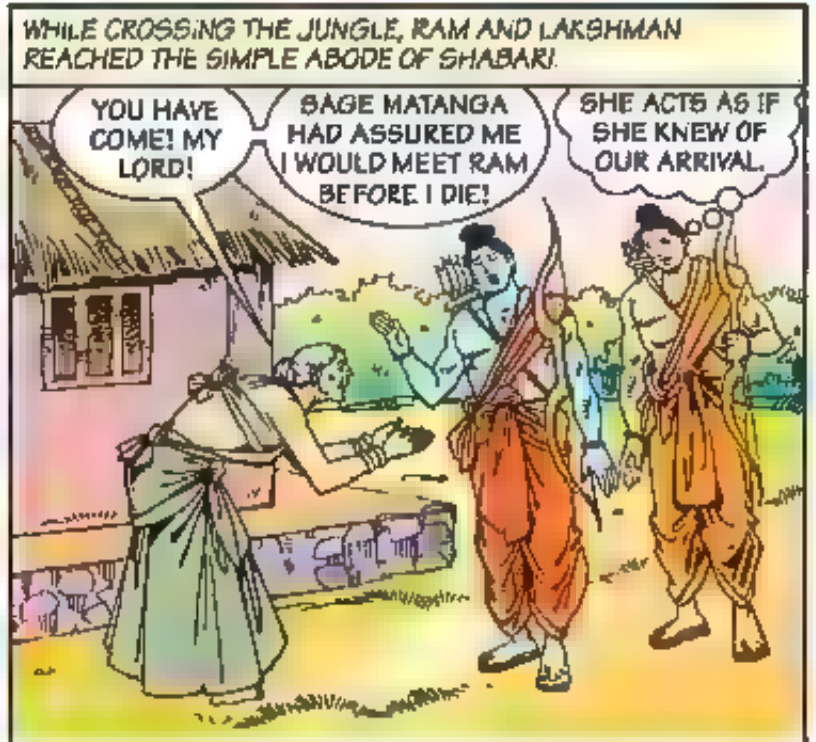


WHILE CROSSING THE JUNGLE, RAM AND LAKSHMAN REACHED THE SIMPLE ABODE OF SHABARI.

YOU HAVE COME! MY LORD!

SAGE MATANGA HAD ASSURED ME I WOULD MEET RAM BEFORE I DIE!

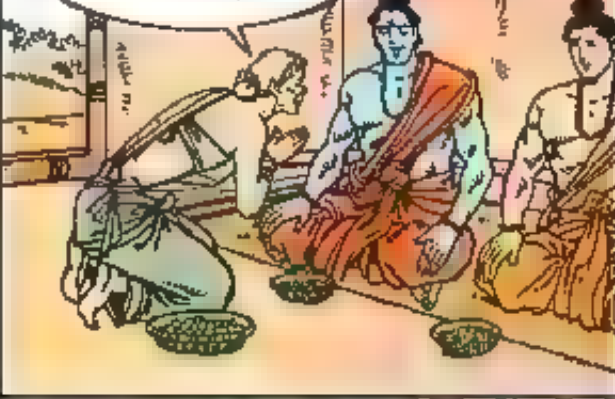
SHE ACTS AS IF SHE KNEW OF OUR ARRIVAL.



The Abduction of sita

DELIGHTED AT THE VISIT, SHABARI WASHED THEIR WEARY FEET WITH COOL WATER, AND GAVE THEM A COMFORTABLE SEAT.

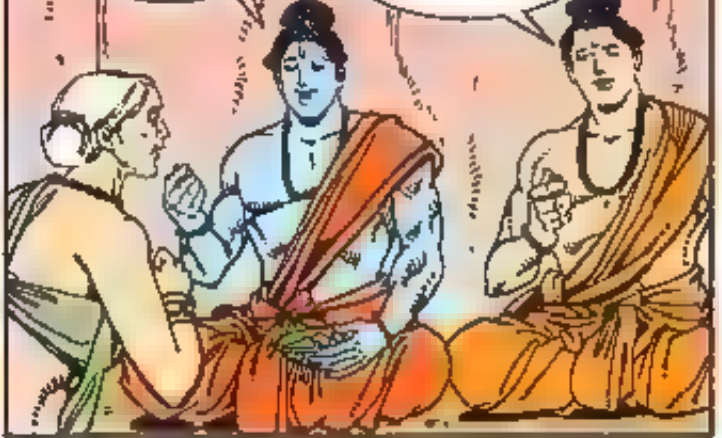
REST AWHILE! I'LL BRING SOME REFRESHMENTS FOR YOU.



SHE GATHERED FRUITS AND BULBS FROM THE FOREST AND OFFERED THEM TO RAM AND LAKSHMAN.

MMM! DELICIOUS!

THIS IS INDEED THE BEST MEAL WE'VE HAD IN DAYS.



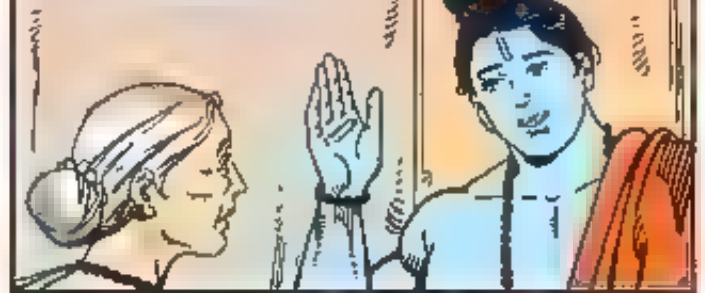
SHABARI WAS THRILLED AT THE PRAISE AND SAT DEVOTELY IN FRONT OF RAM.

HOW CAN I SING YOUR PRAISES? I AM DULL HEADED AND OF A LOW CASTE.

RECOGNIZE ONLY ONE RELATIONSHIP! THAT OF FAITH!



A MAN WITHOUT FAITH IS LIKE A CLOUD WITHOUT MOISTURE, EVEN THOUGH HE MAY HAVE THE CLAIM OF CASTE, KINSHIP, ANCESTRY, FAME, WEALTH AND POWER.



RAM THEN TOLD SHABARI THE NINE MODES OF WORSHIP.

THESE ARE NINE TYPES OF DEVOTION. THE COMPANY OF SAGES, LISTENING TO RELIGIOUS LEGENDS, SERVING THE GURU, SINGING HYMNS, REPEATING THE LORD'S NAME, SELF-CONTROL, TREATING ALL CREATURES WITH RESPECT, THE EIGHTH IS CONTENTMENT AND THE NINTH IS SIMPLICITY AND GUILTESS CONDUCT.



RAM ASSURED SHABARI THAT SHE WAS AMONG THE GREATEST DEVOTEES.

YOU ARE WELL VERSED WITH ALL THESE FORMS. EVEN ONE OF THESE IS ENOUGH TO QUALIFY AS AN ARDENT DEVOTEE! NOW TELL ME, DO YOU HAVE ANY NEWS OF SITA?



SHABARI'S WORDS GAVE A DEFINITE DIRECTION TO THEIR SEARCH FOR SITA.



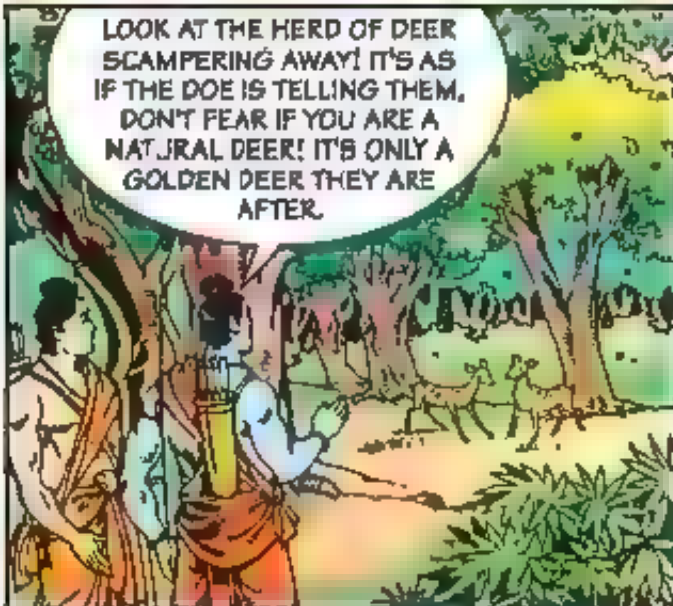
RAM AND LAKSHMAN LEFT THE FOREST AND MADE THEIR WAY TOWARDS LAKE PAMPA.



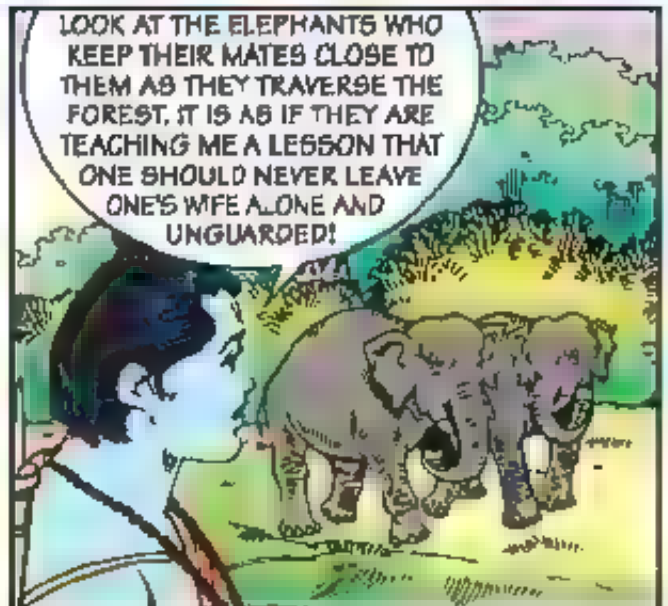
RAM MISSED SITA BY HIS SIDE AND EVERYTHING AROUND HIM REMINDED HIM OF HIS LONESOME STATE.



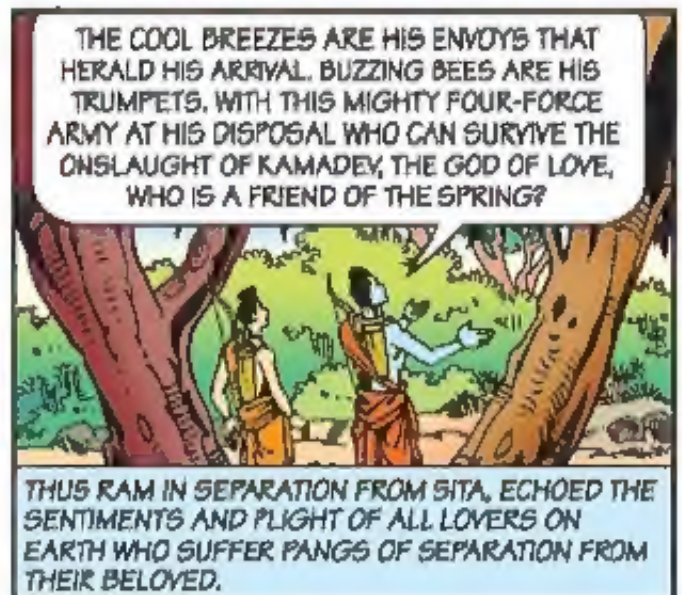
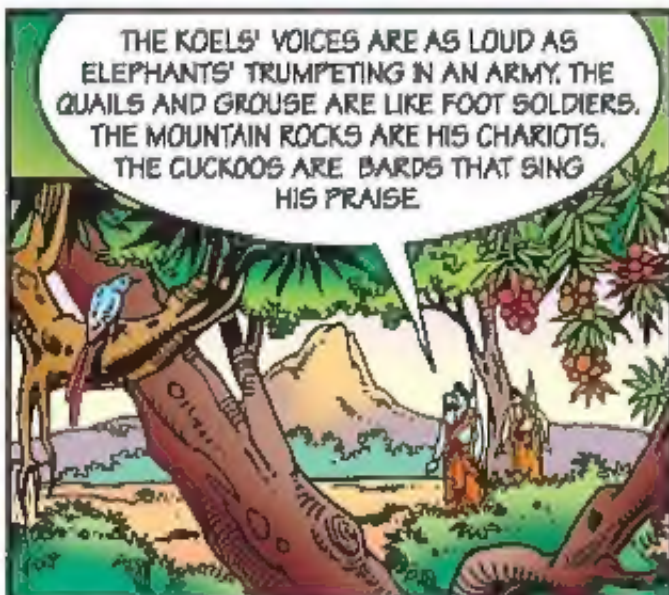
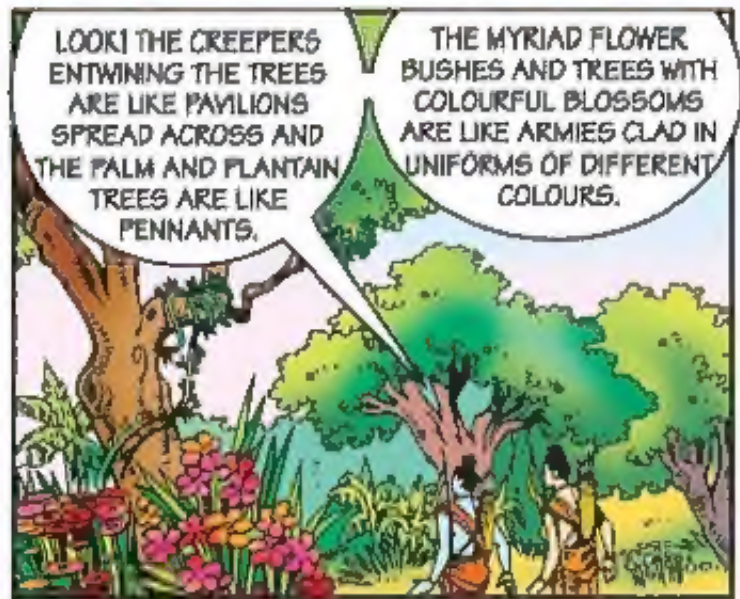
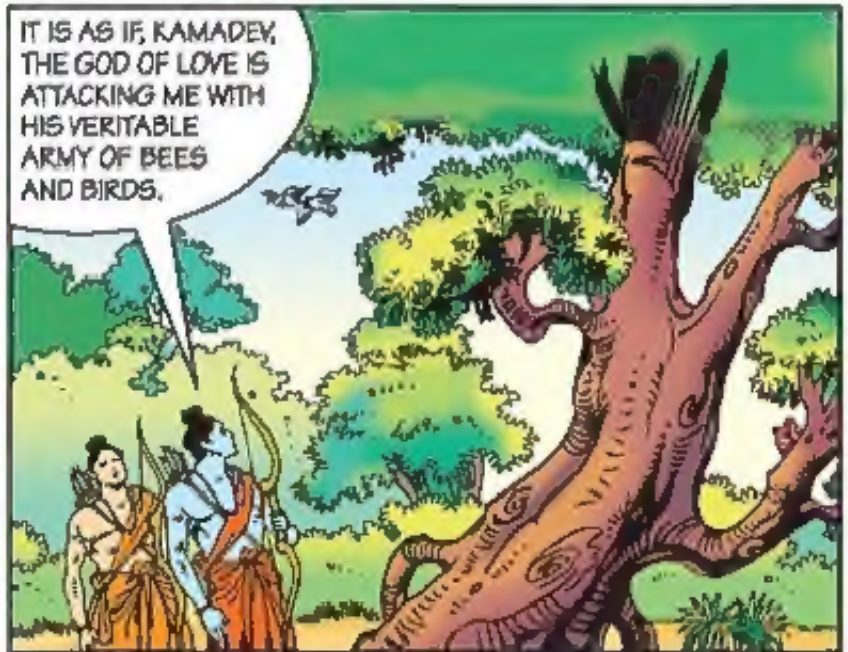
LOOK AT THE HERD OF DEER SCAMPERING AWAY! IT'S AS IF THE DOE IS TELLING THEM. DON'T FEAR IF YOU ARE A NATURAL DEER! IT'S ONLY A GOLDEN DEER THEY ARE AFTER.



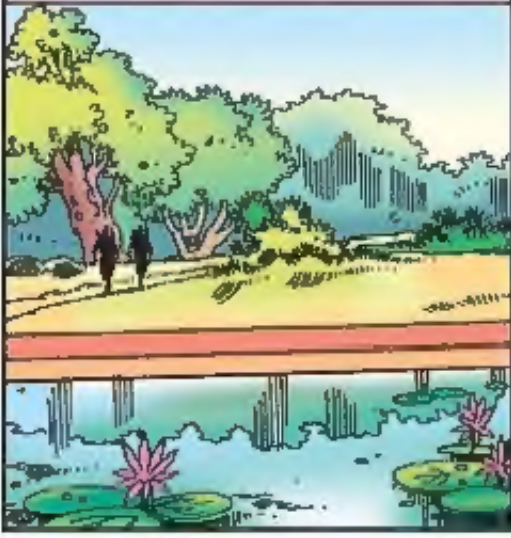
LOOK AT THE ELEPHANTS WHO KEEP THEIR MATES CLOSE TO THEM AS THEY TRAVERSE THE FOREST. IT IS AS IF THEY ARE TEACHING ME A LESSON THAT ONE SHOULD NEVER LEAVE ONE'S WIFE ALONE AND UNGUARDED!



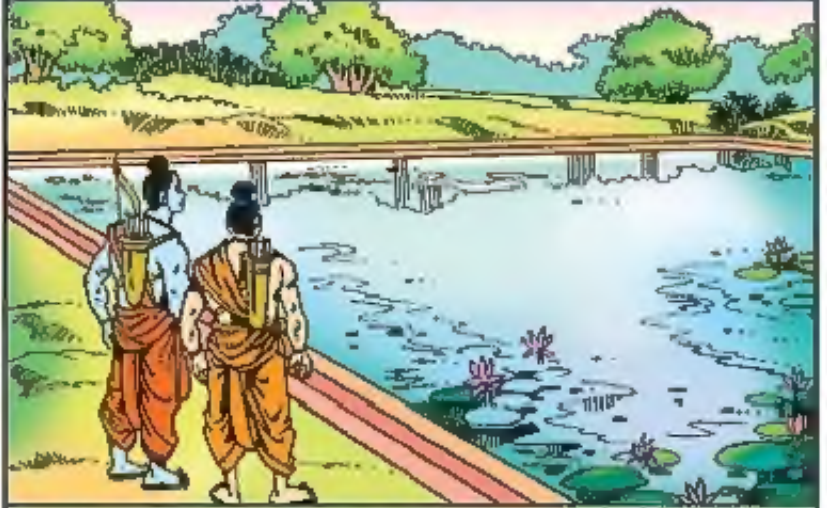
The Abduction of sita



THUS ADMIRING THE VERDANT FOREST IN THE FULL BLOOM OF SPRING, RAM AND LAKSHMAN REACHED THE BANKS OF THE PAMPA LAKE.

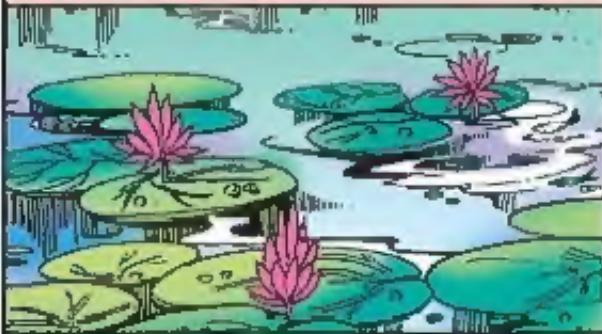


IT WAS A LOVELY LAKE, DEEP, CLEAR AND LIMPID AS THE HEART OF A GUILTESS SAINT.



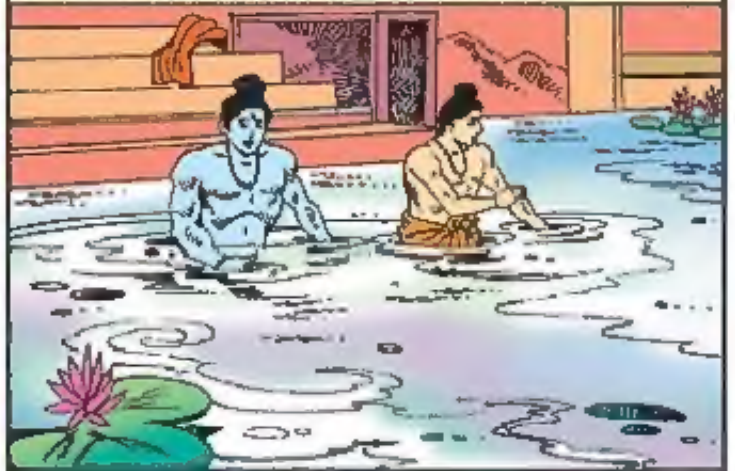
ON ALL FOUR SIDES WERE BEAUTIFUL STEPS DESCENDING INTO THE WATER.

THERE WERE LOTUS LEAVES COVERING THE WATER SURFACE AND FISHES OF ALL COLOURS AND SHAPE FLITTED ABOUT.



SWARMS OF BEES BUZZED OVER THE LOTUS BLOSSOMS AND SWANS AND WATERFOWL SANG THEIR SONG.

THEY BATHED IN THE REFRESHING WATER AND RESTED UNDER THE SHADE OF A TREE ON THE BANK.



BY THE BANKS OF THE BEAUTIFUL PAMPA, THE TWO BROTHERS SAT IN COMPANIONSHIP AND SERENE SILENCE.



SOON, THEY WOULD MEET HANUMAN, SUGREEV AND THE ARMY OF MONKEYS WHO WOULD HELP THEM TO LOCATE SITA AND RESCUE HER FROM THE CLUTCHES OF RAVAN. BUT FOR THE TIME BEING, THE SOFT SOUNDS OF THE LAKE LULLED THEM TO SLEEP, PREPARING THEM FOR THE ORDEAL AHEAD.

पर हित सरिस धर्म नहि भाई
पर पीडा सम नहि अथमाई

There is nothing more pious than doing
good to others. And there is nothing more
wicked than causing harm to others.



पद् कमल धोइ चढ़ाइ नाव न नाथ उतराई चहौं
मोहि राम राउरि आन दसरथ सपथ सब साँची कहौं
बरु तीर मारहुँ लखनु पै जब लगि न पाय परवारिहौं
तब लगि न तुलसीदास नाथ कृपाल पारु उतारिहौं

"I would like to wash the lotus-feet of yours. I do not expect any payment O Rama! I swear by your name and the name of Dasharath, I will get you across the river in my boat only after washing your feet."

